THE PRIEST and HIS MISSION

D. I. Lanslots, O. S. B.

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BY

D. I. LANSLOTS, O.S.B.

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THE PRIEST AND HIS MISSION

INTRODUCTION

CARDINAL GENNARI founded in 1876 a monthly review, called *"Il Monitore Ecclesiastico,"* intended chiefly for priests. He retained the directorship of it up to the time of his death, a few years ago. In it he published from 1908 to 1916 a series of learned articles under his name about the principal obstacles to the right formation of the clergy. He began after Pope Pius X had most wisely arranged a general program of studies, and had laid down disciplinary rules for the education of the young man to the priesthood. These were to be enforced in all the seminaries of Italy. In his "Exhortatio ad Clerum Catholicum" that great Pope addresses all priests.

Forty years of loving investigation about the right formation of the clergy certainly entitled Cardinal Gennari to give his modest opinion, as he calls it, on this important subject. We propose to give in the following pages the views of the eminent Cardinal, as we think they are useful to both the secular and the regular clergy, to all aspirants to

the priesthood, to all pastors and confessors interested in helping the Bishops to recruit a sufficient number of worthy ministers.

All intelligent lovers of truth and goodness realize that a good and pious clergy only can save society from the serious evils that beset it, and from still more serious evils that threaten it.

There are three great obstacles to the right formation of a good and pious clergy. They are: the want of able educators, the difference of the practical interpretation of the fundamental principles admitted by all, and a want of fitness and of necessary care to find out, to choose, and to educate the aspirants to the priesthood. We shall only treat of the last two obstacles, and try to find out the true sense of the principles governing that matter, and their true application. This is all the more important, as in this regard practice and theory do not always agree, and very often are at variance.

There is no educator or superior of clerics who does not hold and preach that the Church wishes no others but priests of distinguished virtue, with sufficient knowledge at least, and with zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; that to be a good priest a divine call is required; that none should be admitted to ordination, unless they have first acquired sufficient positive goodness; that it is better to have a few good priests than many useless. All agree on these principles, but the views concerning

their practical application are far divergent. As the principles are correct, there must be a right way of applying them.

The great Bishop Ketteler contended that probably the foremost cause of the poor results of Catholic action must be sought in a want of clearness of ideas, and that this clearness is above all necessary to give to any collective action that unity and that force without which great results cannot be looked for. What this eminent Bishop affirms of every Catholic work may be applied to what we may call the work of works — the formation of a good and sufficiently numerous clergy. How can we give to the Church such a clergy, if we have no clear, distinct, precise, detailed views as to what we mean by a good priest, by a sufficiently numerous clergy, by a worthy cleric for ordination, by a worthy layman suitable for an ecclesiastical career?

Cardinal Gennari, after a long theoretical and practical study of the question, came to the conclusion that the great diversity of practical judgments, the cause of so many sad mistakes, was to be found in the fact that the principles admitted by all were not properly understood in their concrete value. How can that be? Probably one of the causes is that common human shortsightedness through which, on continually seeing how things are done, we seem to forget what they should be and how they should be done. Furthermore, general principles, unless they

are well analysed, are, like moral truths, rather elastic, and may be interpreted in various ways, according to the preconceived ideas and varied tendencies of those whose duty it is to put them into practice. Finally, motives of self-interest, of an exaggerated numerical need, of abhorrence of annoyances, quarrels, etc., are all powerful reasons to make us believe that the good we desire is sufficiently probable, and that the harm we fear is improbable. To obviate that serious danger it is absolutely necessary that we study all the more keenly the true practical import of the general principles, and of their component parts.

Some of these principles concern the young layman aspiring to the priesthood; others the seminarian; others again the priest. To present the question in the proper light we must try to find out: 1. What sort of priests and how many Holy Church wants; 2. What sort of seminarians and how many she desires to admit to Holy Orders; 3. What sort of young men and how many should be admitted to the seminary. In point of time the good young man comes first, then the good seminarian, and lastly the good priest; this order must be followed in the practical application of well-ascertained principles. This will form the second part of this book. In the first part we shall try to interpret the principles, and therefore we must follow the inverse order. We must first consider the good priest, then the good

seminarian, and finally the good layman with a clerical vocation. We cannot have a correct idea of a good seminarian, unless we know what is demanded of a good priest, nor can we judge of the fitness of a young man, unless we have an exact knowledge of the ecclesiastical state.

It is evident that in an inquiry of this kind we cannot follow any other guide than the Church itself. We must learn the principles and their interpretation from the teaching Church, whether in oecumenical councils, or through its infallible mouthpiece, the Supreme Shepherd. That teaching is helpfully explained to us in the writings of such weighty authors as St. Thomas, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Alphonsus and a host of others. We will endeavor to understand the meaning of the Church's prescriptions, prove their supreme reasonableness, and so establish the absolute necessity of conforming our practical judgment to them.

PART I

Chapter First

WHAT IS A TRULY GOOD PRIEST?

IT is self-evident that the Church wishes no others but good priests, and a sufficient number of them. It suffices then to determine with precision and according to the mind of the Church what a good priest is and what is meant by a sufficiently numerous clergy.

The goodness of any agent is measured by the result of his work in regard to the end, for the attainment of which he is engaged. He is a bad agent if he does not attain it at all; he is middling when he attains some of it; he is good when he reaches the point that could be reasonably expected of him; he is a very good agent when he attains the end copiously and perfectly.

The priest is an agent, an ambassador of God, selected for the particular purpose of continuing on earth the mission of Jesus Christ, which was to glorify His Father, and save men. "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." (Jo. XX. 21.) "I honor my Father." (Jo. VIII. 49.) "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke XIX. 10.) This double purpose may

be considered as one, because to make God known, loved, and served procures at one and the same time His glory and the salvation of souls. As Christ is called the Saviour of the world, so we may call the priest the fisherman of men or the saviour of souls. The twofold end of the priestly office is not limited to the lowest degree, below which would come a grievous mortal sin, and perdition for souls; it extends itself to the highest degree, in which each priest can procure the greater glory of God, and the greater good for souls, by inducing these to know, to love, and to serve God with ever-increasing perfection, according to the measure of graces which he has received. It is clear that such is the duty of the priest, because he has the identical mission of Christ. It was to teach not only the way of salvation, but also the way of perfection. The priest is a preacher of the Gospel, which contains precepts and counsels; he must teach the boundless value of these. He is a minister of the Sacraments, intended not only to give sanctifying grace, but to increase it. He is a spiritual physician, whose duty it is not only to save his patients from death, but to restore perfect health. He is a father. St. John Chrysostom calls him the father of the whole world. As such, he must not only prevent his children from dying of starvation, but furnish them such food as will make them strong and robust. The priest cannot discharge his duties without zeal, but zeal is love, and the true

lover tries to procure all possible good for the object of his love. The more earnestly he endeavors to help those entrusted to him on the road of virtue and perfection, the better he enables them to enjoy in this valley of tears the one true comfort, the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding (Phil. IV. 7), and the farther he withdraws them from the vain and poisonous joys of the world — broken cisterns that cannot hold water. (Jer. II. 13.)

As a physician professes to cure the ailments of his patients, a lawyer to defend the interests of his clients, so does the priest profess to care for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. As a physician, who actually cures the diseases of his patients, is considered a good one; as a lawyer, who effectually causes the rights of his clients to prevail, is a good lawyer, so is the good priest the one who procures the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbor in so far as he is morally able.

St. Ignatius, inspired from above, in his justly renowned "Spiritual Exercises" has a consideration about the end of man. He did not call it a meditation, but the beginning or the foundation, and rightly so. As in logic the premises support the conclusion, and the foundation the building upon it, so in the order of our salvation and perfection, that first truth of our final purpose supports all the others. In like manner we shall see that from the correct idea of a good priest, all the principles of the

formation of the clergy will naturally follow as logical and indubitable deductions. The principles are most clear and well known.

Any of the faithful can tell us that man is essentially the servant of the One who created him. All priests know that they are essentially the continuators of the work of our Redemption. But a generic, superficial knowledge only of such truths, to which the ear has long been used, will remain sterile of results, while the precise, deep, and detailed knowledge of them will be fruitful. This leads us to study accurately the definition of a good priest, as given above.

As we treat of a reasonable agent, who has assumed a state, a profession, a charge, we find that there are three requirements for his success: 1. He must use the means necessary to the end; 2. He must use them in such a way that the end will actually be attained; 3. He must draw these means from their proper sources.

The means to attain the end, besides the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass, may be reduced to two: 1. To preach the word of God. "Preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark XVI. 15). "Teach all nations" (Matt. XXVIII. 19). 2. To administer the Sacraments: "Baptizing them . . . He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood . . . has eternal life. . . . Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them. . . ." These are the selfsame means which

our Lord used: "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke IV. 18). "I came that they have life" — the life of grace which we confer through the Sacraments. Therefore the priest is essentially the teacher and the sanctifier of the people.

There are also two conditions to make these means efficacious: holiness of life and knowledge. Without the first the priest could not preach, nor administer the Sacraments with zeal, unction, and constancy; what he would say with his lips in contradiction to his acts would not be believed, respected or practised, but rather derided and despised. Without sufficient knowledge he would commit numberless mistakes, to the discredit of religion and the ruin of souls.

Finally, there are two sources of holiness and of knowledge: continual prayer and continual study. Hence the beautiful maxim of the great masters: One who is not a man of prayer and of study will never be a good priest, whatever his other attainments may be.

Prayer and study give to the priest holiness and knowledge; these worthily prepare him for the constant and efficacious teaching of the word of God and the administration of the Sacraments, and this double ministry well discharged procures the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Here we have then the constituents of sacerdotal goodness: 1. Not in filthy lucre or other human

purposes, but in attaining his own end of glorifying God and saving souls, a priest must find his delight, and use his time and his strength, in scattering the seed of the word of God, by all means in his power, in his catechism classes as well as in his efforts on great occasions, and in reaping the harvest, especially in the confessional. 2. He must accompany that divine ministry with ever-growing holiness of life, and a swelling treasure of knowledge. 3. He should always draw from the true sources of sacerdotal holiness and knowledge — prayer and study.

If one of these constituents is missing, he can no longer be called a truly good priest, because he will not attain the end at all or not as fully as he should. "Bonum ex integra causa." We use the word "fully" in the reasonable sense, not that he must attempt the impossible of saving all souls, but that he must save as many as he can, and wish to save them all, pray fervently for the salvation of all, and feel, as it were, that he should save them all, if he could. No one doubts the above three constituents of sacerdotal goodness and fitness, but these considerations are still too generic. The limitations of our intellect do not allow us to understand fully the greatness, and hence the obligations of a man who has such close relations with the infinite God. Yet we can understand them sufficiently to determine clearly and beyond question the value of the directions for the selection and the preparation of such a man.

Chapter Second

ACTIVITY OF THE PRIEST

THE first condition to the attainment of the end is that the means and all the means necessary be used. They must be used with energy, earnestness, and constancy. This activity is in proportion to the importance of the end and its extension, and also to the difficulties encountered in attaining it. These conditions are found in the highest degree in the end which the priest must attain.

The importance of it is undoubtedly supreme, because the right of God to be glorified is infinite. The good which he procures for souls by saving them from hell and leading them to heaven is also infinite in the object of happiness and its duration.

The extension of it is very great, conterminous indeed with the human race: "Teach all nations" (Matt. XXVIII. 19). "Preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark XVI. 15). "Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men" (Hebr. V. 1). He is not ordained for the one or the other individual, but for the whole human family. It is enough to bear the image of God, and to have been redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ to have a right to the priest's activity.

Great are also the difficulties to attain the end. The tremendous force of the varied concupiscences in man, coupled with the numerous dangers of the world, and the infinite cunning of the infernal enemy, as also the great weakness of our will, increased usually with bad habits, make the road to perdition broad, and strait the way to life, as Christ assures us. (Matt. VII. 14.)

The truly good priest understands the importance of his mission, and faithfully uses the means to the end. The sacred ministry, and the proper preparation for it, together with prayer and study, are his only preoccupation. He will constantly refuse any occupation foreign to his ministry. He politely declines all invitations to recreations and amusements that might cause him to exceed the limits of a necessary relief. His days are truly and indeed full days; he regrets that time passes so quickly, and that his strength does not allow him to do more. But why such strenuous activity? Let us hear the answer of the good priest:

a. Work, he says, is a universal law: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. III. 19). Would he who is to be the model of every virtue be the only one dispensed from that law?

b. Idleness is the teacher of vice: "Idleness hath taught much evil" (Eccli. XXXIII. 25). Is the priest immune from such danger? Does not experi-

ence show that idleness has sunk many an ecclesiastic into vice?

c. There is nothing more precious than time. Shall the priest squander that priceless treasure, which the lay business man values so highly? The above motives should induce every Christian to shun idleness, and to take care of a particle of time like the avaricious man of a dollar.

d. I am not only a Christian, says the good priest, but a priest. The Lord has given me, not one or two, but five talents: "Unto whom much is given, of him much shall be required" (Luke XII. 48). Woe to me, if at the time of settlement I can only account for four!

e. God has made me nothing less than a saviour of souls; for that purpose He has given me superhuman powers. He wills that I should not hold any of these graces and sublime gifts in vain. God has made me a light of the world; a terrible account shall be required of me for the time employed in useless things, when I became a candle put under the bushel. God has appointed me the salt of the earth for the preservation of souls. How many have I not to season lest they become corrupted? How many to heal lest they die? Poor me, if a single one be lost whom I could have saved! We priests, says St. Gregory, murder as many souls as we could have saved but did not save. (1 *De Offic.*)

f. What shall we say, on the other hand, of the

special and unspeakable glory with which the Lord will reward eternally His tireless ministers?

g. If none of the above considerations impresses you, there is another motive stronger than all — the love of Christ. The Lord in His excessive love for men has bestowed immense blessings upon them, above all the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Death of His Son. This love and those blessings should compel every man to love in return a God so great and so good, and live for Him only. But how much greater is not the love He bore to us His ministers? How much greater and more important the blessings He has conferred upon us? To what greater heights has He not raised us, raising us and assuming us from among the people, and calling us not only His servants, but His friends? The best proof we can give Him of our love is to try to induce all to know Him and love Him, to make all better than they are. The common faithful even are obliged to give Him that token of love. God wills that they love one another, and that they help one another especially in saving their souls: " He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor " (Eccli. XVII. 12). Indeed many of the pious laity exert themselves, even at considerable inconvenience to themselves, for the good of their neighbor. How can we say we love God whom we see not, when we do not love His images whom we see? How can we expect to love our neighbor,

when we are not willing to provide for his needs, particularly those that concern his eternal welfare? The laýman must help his neighbor for sweet charity's sake, which, being well ordered, commands that he first fulfill the obligations of his own state, and then help the neighbor. The salvation of souls is not a mere question of charity for the priest; it is the great obligation of his own state, and therefore he must attend to that, and to that only: "No man, being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular businesses" (2 Tim. II. 4). The good priest therefore says to himself: How could I be a good priest if, while the devil and his emissaries allow themselves no rest in their work of the destruction of souls, I should not exert myself in saving them, I who was appointed by Christ to continue His mission?

So does the good priest argue to put into effect the first constituent of sacerdotal goodness. Numberless are the authorities to corroborate his views. As an illustration we quote the following passages from Massillon: "The spirit of our ministry is the spirit of toil; the priesthood is a toilsome dignity. The Church, whose ministers we are, is a vineyard, a field, a harvest, a building to be raised higher and higher, a holy warfare, all expressions that denote solicitude and toil, all symbols of activity. Hence a priest owes his time to the faithful. The time he spends in vain and idle amusements outside of an honest and

necessary recreation, the moments and the days he wastes in mundane conversations, in play and dissipation, are days and moments which he should have devoted to the salvation of his brethren, who will demand an account from him before the tribunal of God. He ceases to be a minister, when he ceases to be a worker. . . . He wastes the time upon which the salvation of the people and the eternal welfare of his brethren depend. He squanders the time to which Christ has attached the conversion of sinners, the strengthening of the weak, the perseverance of the just. . . . As long as there shall be sinners to convert, ignorant to instruct, weak to sustain, unhappy to console, oppressed to defend, unbelievers to convince, how can a priest find time to waste? Are we then made to lead an idle life, when with a most rigorous use of our time we are not able to satisfy all the demands upon it? "

How is it that all priests do not share the above views? Cardinal Gennari thinks it is because they were not sufficiently impressed upon them by those who had charge of their formation to the priesthood. It is the bounden duty of Superiors to impress deeply upon the minds of all seminarians that the life of a priest must be spent entirely to promote the interests of God and of souls. St. Alphonsus looked upon the sermon on priestly zeal during the retreat of the clergy as the most necessary and useful of all, because if only one of their number, as may be ex-

pected with the grace of God, resolves to spend his time earnestly for the salvation of souls, a thousand souls may be gained and saved by means of that priest. (*Selva*, c. IX.) We may say as much of the first element of sacerdotal goodness, for after all those who are concerned with the formation of a future priest cannot have any other object in view than to give workers to the Church.

Chapter Third

OBJECTIONS AND ANSWERS

A REFUTATION of the objections which are usually raised against the views we have expressed will dissipate all doubt as to their correctness.

1. Some may say: I am not a pastor, I have no charge of souls; I grant that pastors will lose themselves, if they do not do what is necessary for their flock; I have no obligations towards them because they are not entrusted to me.

Answer. The objection sounds unusual in our country, because there are no benefices or livings without care of souls; priest here sounds almost synonymous with pastor, assistant, rector, missionary, etc. Some easy position may be assigned to elderly priests worn out by long years of apostolic work, and these priests continue even then to work as much as they can for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. If newly ordained priests find all the positions filled in their dioceses, they will offer their services to other needy dioceses, or go to the foreign mission field.

We treat the objection as applying to one who is neither pastor, nor assistant, rector, nor missionary, one who has, we might think, no charge of souls, to bring out more forcibly the obligations inherent to the priesthood. Such a one is not a pastor, but he is a priest, and this alone imposes upon him the obligation of saving souls. The common faithful must help their neighbors in saving their souls; charity obliges them to it. The priest must attend to it, not merely for charity's sake, but on account of the very duties of his state. A pastor is obliged to save souls by charity as a Christian; by his very state as a priest; and by commutative justice in virtue of a quasi-contract with the Church who provides his living on condition that he perform his duties. A pastor will be lost, if he seriously neglects his triple duty; the ordinary priest will be lost, if he seriously neglects his twofold duty; a layman may commit a grievous sin (though in very rare instances) if he neglects his duty of charity. The guilt is in proportion to the various titles of the obligation.

For the first four centuries of Christianity, there were no pastors in the modern meaning of that word. We trace their institution to the end of the fourth century, and then it only meant a head to the priests of a district for the purpose of giving a more regular and fruitful direction to the sacred ministry, and to have one more directly responsible to God, to his superiors, and to the faithful. The intention never

was to concentrate the sacred ministry in the pastor alone and relieve the others. We do not find a word in the writings of the ancient Fathers and Doctors pointing out such a distinction among priests. They invariably speak of the priest, of the sacred minister, of the man of God, etc. The theologians and the ascetic writers after them agree that even a priest, without a particular charge, is bound by the same substantial obligation, even without the obligation of justice. If a priest has no flock, yet he has been appointed as a minister of Christ, to be a shepherd; he has received a power which he cannot leave with impunity idle and useless. If the Church has not entrusted a part of the flock to our care, it has been in its entirety recommended to our zeal and our charity. In virtue of the priesthood itself we have been charged with the mission of the Supreme Shepherd; by it we became fathers of the faithful. The Church does not intend to enlist in its ministry slothful workers; all without distinction must cultivate the evangelical field.

St. Alphonsus inculcates that same doctrine in several of his immortal works. It is useless to say, he writes in *Selva,* I am only a priest, I have no charge of souls, it is enough if I take care of myself. No! every priest is bound to attend the best way he can to the salvation of souls . . . the bishops and the pastors are not equal to the needs of the people. If God had not selected the other priests, He would

not have provided sufficiently for His Church. How, says St. Leo, take you the honor of the priesthood, and you will not toil for souls? St. Thomas, when treating of the simple priest without any particular charge, says: A priest, who fails through negligence or ignorance to help souls, makes himself guilty before God of all the souls that are lost through his failure to do his duty. (*Op.* 65.) The Ven. Cafasso in his "Retreats to the clergy" writes: "Upon all of us ecclesiastics, and upon each one in particular, without exception, rests the absolute and indispensable obligation to endeavor as far as we can and with all our might that sin may not increase on earth, that it might disappear from the earth if that were possible. On the strength alone of our sacerdotal character we are bound, not merely by charity to our neighbor, but in virtue of our office and intrinsically inherent duty to promote zealously the interests of our God. . . . That zeal is so necessary to us ecclesiastics as to constitute the only reason, and therefore the very marrow and substance of our state." (*Inst.* 9.)

The great Pope Leo XIII confirms all the above authorities in his Encyclical of December 8, 1902, to the Bishops of Italy. Cardinal Gennari writes that superiors and educators of ecclesiastical students should know that Encyclical as also the one of Pius X of July 28, 1905, like their Pater and Ave, and meditate upon them as the last ends should be medi-

tated upon. Leo XIII says: "The Catholic Priesthood, (he speaks of all sacred ministers without distinction), sharer of the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ must continue up to the end of the world the same mission as the eternal Father entrusted to the Incarnate Word. To work out the eternal salvation of souls will always be the great commandment, which the priesthood cannot neglect. The whole tradition of the Church unanimously proclaims that the priest is another Christ. . . . The priest is above all the ordained teacher, physician, and shepherd of souls. Consider the grave responsibility of those priests, who, in such great need of the Christian people, neglect to give their own coöperation in the exercise of the sacred ministries, especially of preaching and of confessing; of those also who do not bring to the task an enlightened activity; all of these correspond badly to their own vocation in a matter so important to the salvation of souls."

We think, therefore, that it is conclusively proved that a priest, whether pastor or not, whether in justice obliged or not, has the obligation inseparable from his character, essential to his state, to devote his time, his talents, and his strength to his mission of procuring the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

II. Undoubtedly a simple priest may be bound to busy himself with the welfare of souls, but only then, as St. Alphonsus says, when the people are in great

spiritual need for want of priests and confessors. In my neighborhood there is no such need, and therefore I need not worry, I can devote myself to other pursuits.

Answer. The objector is greatly mistaken, because he confounds two very different things — the general and fundamental obligation, binding every priest to work for the salvation of souls — and the particular obligation to work for it, not with the means that please him best, but with those which are *hic et nunc* the most opportune, the most efficacious, and the most necessary to the salvation of souls; this is the end which the priest must attain, but there are different means. The means may be reduced to two: the word of God and the Sacraments. The word of God may be preached in various ways: instructions to the people, missions, catechism to the children, the religious press, apologetic conferences, teaching of sacred sciences, private admonitions, etc. This variety of ways and means leads many a priest to think that he can freely choose what suits him best, and to consider himself justified in declining the most laborious and the most difficult of all — hearing confessions. Is a priest allowed freely to choose or must he use the means most suitable to the end at present? St. Alphonsus examined the question scientifically; finding that it had never been discussed before, he studied it most carefully, and then gave his opinion, which was adopted by all

moralists after him. The following points are a summary of it:

a. Every priest is obliged to justify the purpose of his existence as a priest — the salvation of souls, and in striving to attain it he must use the means that are more opportune to the needs of the people, not those that are more convenient to himself.

b. This principle must apply above all to the duty of hearing confessions, this being one of the principal charges entrusted by Christ to His ministers; instruction, correction, or prayer cannot take the place of it. If a brother is hungry, it is not enough to provide him with new clothes.

c. As a priest must try to attain the end, so he must use the means, and therefore he must hear confessions when there is need. If he is not versed enough in moral or ascetic theology, he is obliged to acquire the necessary knowledge, unless he be prevented by moral or physical impossibility, or the weakening of his mental faculties.

d. Lame are the excuses of inability or weakness. If one doubts his ability, he must study and make himself capable. St. Francis de Sales calls the other excuse false humility. These excuses are but masks of sloth. He adds that when God gives us a talent, He wishes that we use it, and true humility demands that we do use it and obey; the humble alone can give proofs of courage by relying, not on themselves,

but on the help of God. Such is the teaching of St. Alphonsus.

St. John B. de Rossi said that there was no more efficacious way to assure our own salvation than by our work in the confessional. There we gather the fruit of the divine seed scattered from the pulpit, the altar, etc. Could there be a means more reassuring for our own salvation than snatching souls from the clutches of the devil and replacing them in the open side of Jesus Christ? It would indeed be dangerous and ruinous for both confessor and penitent, if he were without any eagerness to administer the Sacrament of Penance rightly, but if he does his best, without scruples, he finds in that sublime ministry the most efficacious means to save and sanctify himself.

Weight is added to the above considerations when we mark the difference of our times and those of St. Alphonsus. Then the people were not attacked in their faith, misled by the sects, and other elements of disorder as they are to-day. Then there was no such religious indifference, such aversion, such satanic hatred of things sacred and divine. Perversion and infidelity gain; faith is weakened in many places: a reason for sacred ministers to arm themselves with a more ardent zeal for the salvation of the Christian fold.

We should therefore be well convinced that the obligation of doing all in our power for the salvation

of souls is not derived only from the temporal emoluments we receive, nor from the grave needs of the people, nor from any other extrinsic motive; it is an obligation inherent to our priesthood, essential to it, inseparable from our character, so that no authority can dispense from it, no more than it could dispense Religious from tending to perfection, or parents from taking care of their children.

III. Granting that every priest must do something for souls, this does not mean that he must attend to that alone; this would be exacting too much. Is a physician or a lawyer bad if, after having attended to the duties of his profession, he devotes the rest of his time to estates or other business?

Answer. What we have said of the Catholic priesthood has been the teaching of all those who, in the last 1900 years, have made an earnest study of it. We have given some extracts of only a few of them. Yet, it is no wonder that at first sight the activity demanded of every priest should seem exaggerated. It is one of the human miseries that, by dint of seeing what is done, we finally conceive a wrong idea of what ought to be done. When we thoroughly understand that the priest is a man of God, a continuator of the saving mission of the word Incarnate, and as another Christ, the pretention that he must busy himself only with the salvation of souls will no longer appear excessive.

We have remarked that the only and essential end

of our state is to make God known, loved, and served, and that this end is of sovereign importance, of limitless extension, and of supreme difficulty; if we could increase to a hundredfold our time and strength, it would ever remain inexhaustible. To multiply ourselves can only be the holy and meritorious wish of a heart burning with zeal. With such a field before us as that entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, can it be right to spend part of our time for other purposes? If a priest had converted as many thousands of souls as St. Francis Xavier, the duty of converting more, if possible, would remain. Converting them is not all, he must help them with the word of God and the Sacraments; he must preserve them in the faith and cause them to progress continually in virtue. He can never say: I have done all there was to be done; but he should be able to say: I have done what I could. If St. Francis Xavier had continued to live and had rested on his laurels in the thought that the harvest had been rich enough, he would thereby have ceased to be a good priest. We repeat the words of Massillon: One ceases to be a minister of God, when he ceases to work. Whatever a priest can do for the glory of God and the salvation of souls is very little when compared with what it would be desirable he could do. We may certainly be satisfied with the thought that God is pleased, if we do what we can, and we need not desire more than God's pleasure, but to be rea-

sonably assured of that we must indeed do what we can. Let us illustrate this thought by a comparison. A landowner hires the only ten laborers he can find, and says to five of them: Go into my garden and do this or that work. To the other five he says: Go into my broad field and cut the wheat that is ripe already; I know that you are too few, and that a great part of the harvest shall be lost, but you shall do what you can. If then afterwards the master goes into the garden, and finds the work done and the laborers resting, he will not find fault with them; they have completed the task assigned. If on going to his field he finds the five enjoying an unnecessary rest after a little work, he would justly tell them: You know that a great deal of the grain will be lost, because there are too few of you, why should you rest unnecessarily? What could they answer?

This similitude of the greatness of the harvest and the fewness of the laborers came from the lips of our divine Lord Himself. Have then the sacred writers no reason to call priests inexcusable for any loss of time, for any occupation foreign to the one entrusted to them by the great Householder Himself.

The office assigned by divine Providence to a physician or a lawyer demands only a more or less limited attention, because the purpose itself is limited. Hence, after having discharged conscientiously their professional duties, they can devote their leisure time to other things. The priest's mission is

of a different nature. For us, time and energy spent in other pursuits is time and energy stolen in the true line of our duties. For our instruction the Holy Ghost caused the zealous St. Paul to write the sublime words: " I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls " (2 Cor. XII. 15). Christ came on earth for no other purpose than to enkindle the fire of divine love; that is what the priest must do in all his priestly life and with all his strength.

IV. If the above is true, the life of a priest is one of great sacrifice, and the most unhappy of all.

Answer. The priest's life is indeed a very busy life; all ecclesiastical writers call it so. But, unhappy? Just the reverse for those who love Christ; for them it is the happiest of all. The objection is suggested by the evil one to those only who have not experienced how sweet the Lord is to His faithful cooperators. A truly unhappy life is that of a priest, who does not spend himself for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He does not experience the unspeakable joys of the Apostolate, and he cannot taste the vain joys of the world without cruel disappointment and bitter remorse. No human tongue can express the consolations overwhelming the heart of a good priest, when he sees that, thanks to his ministry, the sinners return to God, the good become more fervent, scandals and enmities cease, stolen goods are restored to their owners, the churches are filled, the Sacraments frequented, the word of God

is bearing fruit. What diocese has not in grateful remembrance the memory of priests devoted with ardor and constancy to the sacred ministry, never quarrelsome, never sad, but ever with a pleasant smile — a reflex of internal peace and happiness?

Love is needed — the love of God and the love of souls — but with that love life cannot be unhappy; the life of the hardworking priest is a foretaste of heaven.

Chapter Fourth

OBJECTIONS AND ANSWERS *Continued*

V. Another says: I never refuse my services when I am asked, but otherwise I stay at home, and after the example of the Apostle I keep myself busy with some manual labor, or in giving some private lessons, partly to avoid idleness, and partly to help out my relatives who made great sacrifices to enable me to become a priest. I think that in this way I am not failing in my duty.

Answer. The objection is intricate and requires a detailed solution. It would seem that when a priest is always willing to help, especially in the confessional, and helps the souls with sweet, patient, industrious charity, the requests for his services would be so many as to keep him always occupied. But in the event that he is not always invited, he would unjustly think himself relieved from the obligation of working for souls. The above excuse might have been admissible at a time when the people flocked to the churches and the confessionals. Now a great many avoid us and we must go in search of them. The reason for this is based upon the very nature of the priesthood, as Leo XIII and Pius X repeatedly

proclaimed. In the Sacred Writings we are called fishermen, hunters, soldiers on the battlefield, etc. Do fishermen or hunters wait until a fish or a rabbit presents itself at the window? Does the soldier sleep on the battlefield amid the bullets from the enemy camp? All of them go in search of their prey, and cheerfully accept scores of inconveniences. A good priest cannot rest satisfied by receiving only the sheep that spontaneously return to the fold, but, after having placed these in safety, he must zealously go in search of the stray ones. Many of these not only shun but abhor us; there are numbers of them in our great country; there is scope for the zeal of every priest, even in a well organized parish with a sufficient number of priests.

St. Paul furnished us an example of manual labor, performed not for a desire of temporal gain, but with a wonderful detachment of it, and a generous zeal for the salvation of souls. He took such good care of time, that to save the few moments required for the distribution of alms, he assigned that duty to the deacons, as the other Apostles had done, in order to be all the more assiduous in prayer, and in the ministry of the word. On the other hand he was fully aware that the laborer is worthy of his hire; he himself wrote so to the Corinthians and to Timothy. If then he sometimes performed manual labor, he did so only to support himself and his co-laborers, and to

remove from his wavering neophytes every suspicion that the preachers of the Gospel were working for temporal gain.

The school in itself cannot be regarded as the proper occupation of a priest, except in so far as it is a means to teach religion. It is true that Jesus Christ said to His Apostles " Teach all nations " but these words refer to the other " Preach the gospel." The priest is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God; he is the teacher of religion, not of grammar or of history. Because, however, the teaching of human letters and sciences may be a most powerful means to attract, and instruct in religion, many who would not hear otherwise our religious instructions, as is the case especially at the present time. There are many flourishing teaching Orders and Congregations in the Church to the inestimable advantage of faith and morals. Many zealous priests with usefulness follow their example. If this was always useful, it is now the sovereign and often the only means for the priests to acquire or to preserve the esteem, the respect, and the benevolence of families, and so keep them in, or attract them to, the practice of religion. Another important reason is that youth may not fall, to their utter destruction, into the hands of teachers of unbelief rather than of letters and of sciences. A priest can therefore teach his pupils if, considering circum-

stances, he can in this way promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls better than by any other means.

Not only the school but many other works, prompted by corporal or spiritual mercy, may be helpful to the effect that God be known and loved.

Who shall decide that such or such an occupation, though of its nature not sacerdotal, is preferable in certain circumstances to a really priestly ministry? Zeal. It is not likely that a priest, animated with true zeal, make a mistake in the selection; but one devoid of zeal will easily be led astray by the thought that a given occupation is more useful to souls, because it is more in keeping with his personal advantage or inclination. True zeal is always combined with true humility. Humility causes one to distrust his own views and follow those of Superiors; without humility one cannot have true zeal. True zeal will cause one faithfully to observe the following three rules governing priestly activity: 1. Not to spend our time in things foreign to the attainment of the purpose of our state. 2. For that purpose, not to select the means which are more pleasant, more convenient, and more useful to ourselves, but those which are more efficacious to procure, as copiously as possible, the glory of God and the salvation of souls. 3. In making the choice of the means not to trust our own views, but make them dependent *in foro externo* on our Superiors,

and *in foro interno* on a prudent, learned, and pious spiritual director. Such directors are hard to find, but it is to our interest to find them.

A priest is not to be blamed if with his savings he relieves the true needs of his near relatives. After all, the best return a man of God can make to his family for the sacrifices they have made on his behalf is that of good advice, of a holy life, and of prayer offered for them during Mass.

VI. I would do more but my health does not permit it.

Answer. The priest must unquestionably take some care of his health, but excessive care is a worse disorder and of more frequent occurrence. A priest overafraid of losing his health and shortening his life will do very little for souls. After all, what is health and life to be spent for, if not in the fulfilment of our duties? Is it worth while to take care of the means at the expense of the end? Constant observation shows that a sober and active life, and a discreet carelessness of small ailments and of slight exposures to disease is more conducive than detrimental to health. Poor souls, if their salvation were to depend on the services of such priests only, in whom true zeal is coupled with perfect health of the body! For our instruction and comfort, St. Paul, who had cured so many miraculously, would not cure his beloved Timothy. He contented himself with advising Timothy that he should not continue

to abstain from wine entirely: "Do not still drink water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thy frequent infirmities" (1 Tim. V. 23). He did not tell him: Take a long rest, consider only your health, but in the very next chapter of the same letter he tells him: "Fight the good fight of faith." In his next letter he tells him: "Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. II. 3).

In this matter none is a good judge in his own case, and the only norm to know the will of God and do it is obedience. Blessed are the obedient, says St. Francis de Sales, because God will not permit that they stray from the right path. (Phil. p. 3, ch. 11.)

VII. Work is not distasteful to me, but in my parish there is absolutely nothing to do except on Sundays and Holidays; everybody is at work on weekdays.

Answer. If you are a man of prayer and of study, these two duties will occupy a great part of the day. They will, moreover, suggest ever so many means for use on weekdays to the benefit of the old people, of the sick, and of the children, that you will find the day too short, especially if you wish to prepare properly, as the holy pastor of Ars did, a good sermon and a good catechism instruction for Sunday.

With a little more zeal you will perhaps succeed in inducing your people to come to church early in the morning, or late in the evening after work, espe-

cially at certain times during the year. Then you have your school; you should provide honest recreation for the boys and the girls; give them occasionally an interesting lecture, etc. If we love God and souls fervently, useful occupations will never be wanting.

VIII. I cheerfully hear confessions and assist the dying, but to prepare a sermon and preach it is a martyrdom, because I am no orator, my memory is weak, my delivery is poor; I could not be a success, especially nowadays when great preachers are in demand.

Answer. If you wish to preach only to make a good show, it may be better not to preach at all, because God would not bless your efforts. If, however, you think that you have not the proper qualifications to preach the word of God decently, you may rest assured that many poorer speakers than you, spurred on by zeal and led by obedience, have become most efficient preachers by means of a method, the efficacy of which is known too little; that is to say, constant and gradual practice. If after preaching a sermon you try to avoid another for six months, or wish to begin with a panegyric, the most difficult kind of sermon, you fail in constancy and gradual progression. Begin with the catechism of the children; tell the pastor that you desire to help him in that glorious work; let him give you one of the higher classes. After the necessary instruction by

questions and answers, add a ten-minute explanation of one point of the lesson, and promise your little hearers that you will always do so if they are attentive. In that short instruction pronounce your words so distinctly that not a syllable be lost; let your delivery be correct and dignified, not savoring of the street or the theater. With all these precautions you will find your audience restless after a little while, and you will discover that your remarks must be interspersed with some lively anecdote or interesting story. After some time of this constant practice you will find that you have acquired the most difficult and most important art of keeping the attention of your audience.

IX. A young priest says: I do not dislike to busy myself with the duties of my state, and I had begun to do the best I could. At present I do very little, because the constant bickerings, censures, and petty jealousies of my confreres have annoyed me. They go so far as to misinterpret my intentions and discredit me with the public. Do our elders, or our superiors, encourage us young priests?

Answer. If we grant the truth of the facts you allege for your justification, and deplore with you the attitude of your confreres in the priesthood, you must agree that the treatment you receive cannot justify your inactivity. You know that all who wish to live piously in Christ will suffer persecution. How can others but grumble, when your activity is

a bitter rebuke to their sloth? What good work, or what holy enterprise must not pass through the crucible of contradiction? On the other hand, you know that charity, the mother of zeal, accommodates itself to all circumstances and suffers all, that love is strong as death, jealousy as hard as hell; that many waters cannot quench charity, neither the floods drown it, that if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing. (Cant. VIII.) If then the waters of contradiction have quenched your zeal, it seems legitimate to conclude that it was not as fervent as it should be in every sacerdotal heart. Perhaps, if you examine yourself well, you will find that the slackening of your zeal proceeds from the cooling of your charity and that this coolness has its origin in a weakening of the supports of true piety — meditation and spiritual reading. In proportion as your charity increases, your zeal will be rekindled, and your will overcome all obstacles. If you wish to succeed the following means may be helpful to you:

1. A virtuous choice of work. Virtue is the immolation of corrupt nature to grace. Nature impels you to choose the kind of ministry that is more conspicuous and agreeable; it is better for you, so far as possible and without becoming exclusive, to prefer the more humble and laborious occupations, such as: assistance of the sick, instruction of the children. Nature prompts you to take special care of the

weaker sex; prudence and virtue suggest that you do the reverse, and take better care of the boys and of the old sinners, that you prefer the poor to the rich, the uncouth to the highly cultured, the sick to the healthy, etc. This will prove to your confreres that you seek God and not yourself; this course will be most pleasing to God, of infinite merit to yourself, of great edification for all, and will bridle the tongue of the worst faultfinder.

2. Meekness in all and with all. Meekness is a weapon which nothing can resist, as St. Francis de Sales was wont to say. This seems an exaggeration, but it is the simple truth; it will frequently change a hater of priests into their sincere friend. It will certainly make an impression on your confreres.

3. Do not introduce any novelties without first asking light from God, and advice from man. Ask the advice of your confessor and of your confreres, especially of those who, you think, are opposed to you. A little attention to them in the beginning will prevent them from finding fault afterwards.

4. Have pity on the defects of your neighbor. Before showing pity in words, you must feel it in the heart, thinking that you also need compassion, and that the Lord continually takes pity on you. When your people place a wrong interpretation on your efforts, try to attenuate the cause and the purpose of their criticism. You will edify them by it, and they will stop censuring you.

5. Do not seek consolation from men, but let your affliction be soothed at the feet of Jesus in the tabernacle; you will rise full of joy and of new strength. Show yourself all the kinder with your detractors; if you are censured in your own presence, let a smile be your answer, and you will find that the trouble will vanish away like mist before a north wind.

6. Examine your own conduct dispassionately. Our imperfections often give rise to the detraction. If only we could find a good friend to warn us of our shortcomings, we would realize that others see them better than we do.

With such means as the above and the help of God all obstacles to your zeal will disappear.

X. A young priest says: Although I am doing something for souls, I could do much more. I have no fortune of my own, my salary and intentions hardly suffice, therefore I think that I should make some provision for sickness and old age, and try to make some money by other means.

Answer. "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" (Matt. XIV. 31). Is not Our Lord as near to us as He was to His Apostles in their little boat? Have we any reason to doubt that He will ever allow the necessary to fail us? The Saints have always said and experience has always confirmed that the Lord will never allow His faithful servants to be wanting for honest support. He illustrated it with

the beautiful comparisons of the flowers of the field and the birds of the air. How much more provident and loving a care will He not take of his worthy ministers?

Hence ascetic writers tell us that the good priest should never look upon temporal gain as the primary or even secondary object of his activity; he can only take it as an accessory, as he may be certain that divine Providence will never be failing. "Cast thy care upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee" (Ps. LIV. 23). Far from us to condemn those who to their confidence in God add a moderate and easy care of what may be necessary for the future! Infirm priests' funds, mutual help associations, some life insurance, are praiseworthy. The great trouble is that a mere accessory becomes our chief preoccupation and it may make us overanxious and overexacting. We know the words of the Holy Ghost: "Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content" (1 Tim. VI. 8). We preach that doctrine to others and we would be afraid of putting it into practice ourselves! "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke XII. 34). Overanxiety prevents us from consecrating ourselves entirely to the purpose of our state — the glory of God and the salvation of souls; it spoils the little we can do in that direction; a divided heart and mind cannot succeed.

The answers to these objections will put in a clear

light the undeniable fact that a good priest, truly faithful to the mandate which he has received from Jesus Christ, must spend himself and devote all his strength, all his time, all his care, to procure the salvation of souls.

Chapter Fifth

PRIESTLY VIRTUE

OF the three things which make up the goodness of a priest, activity is the nearest to the end, but prayer, taken in its broad sense, accompanied by study comes first in the order of causality. In regard to the efficacy in attaining the end, holiness of life enlightened by learning is the queen. Prayer and study that do not produce robust virtue and solid science are not what they should be; activity which is not quickened and directed by virtue and learning is as a body without the soul, little less than useless, often very harmful.

All recognize in theory the need for the priest to be holy and learned but there is a great difference of opinion in determining the nature and the degree of holiness and of learning demanded by the Church. To succeed in establishing the truth, a few remarks are necessary at the outset:

1. We must carefully distinguish the desirable degree of holiness and of learning from the absolutely necessary degree; we must not confuse what a priest should properly be with what a good priest must necessarily be. On considering the unspeakable

height of the dignity to which we have been raised, and of the ministry that has been entrusted to us, we cannot fail to understand that heroic sanctity only could be proper to honor our state in the discharge of our duties and that, if possible, we should be adorned with the highest degree of it. We would realize at the same time that to administer the Sacraments properly and to teach religion, especially in our days when we must defend it against so many and such terrible attacks, more than ordinary learning is required and that we should all excel in knowledge.

Such a degree is not possible to all the ministers of Christ, but it is not necessary. If only the most holy and the most learned were to be admitted to the sanctuary, there would not be a sufficient number to take care of the faithful and to convert the infidels. St. Philip Neri indeed said: "Give me ten holy priests and the world will be converted," but he knew that these ten would not have the gift of ubiquity, and that they would convert the world by inviting numbers of coöperators to join them, as St. Paul enjoined Titus to do, viz.: to ordain priests in every city (I. 5), and as the other Apostles had done. Our divine Master chose in addition to the twelve Apostles also seventy-two Disciples, and called their attention to the scarcity of laborers, and the consequent need to ask the Master of the harvest to increase their number. The highest degree of holiness

and learning cannot be demanded of all ecclesiastics, and it is not necessary to attain the purpose of the priesthood. A certain degree, however, is necessary and possible, and is demanded of all.

2. If the highest degree were required, most of us would have occasion to be discouraged; it is something to be desired, but hardly to be hoped for; unable to reach the top we might not even try for the point which we must reach. If we consider and aim only at what is strictly necessary in virtue and learning, we might feel inclined to clip our wings and prevent ourselves from reaching the height where God wants us. We might say: God has entrusted the priesthood, not to angels, but to men, and knows that we poor children of Eve are inclined to evil from our very infancy, and therefore takes pity on our misery. If we do not lose sight either of the desirable or of the necessary, we shall then at the same time avoid discouragement and slothful lukewarmness.

3. The degree of virtue and of learning must be proportionate to the needs of the time. As the pride, and the depravity of the heart have perhaps never led to corruption so much as in our own days, it is clear that ordinary means are not sufficient to cure the ills of mankind, and that more powerful remedies are needed, that is, greater holiness and far greater learning than may have sufficed before, as Leo XIII and Pius X have so often insisted upon.

4. Although both virtue and learning be most

necessary, yet we must attach more importance to virtue. First, because virtue makes learning possible, as it shows up the obligation of acquiring it, whereas learning in itself does not necessarily lead to holiness. When we hear of a fervent priest we may take it for granted that he is cultured in proportion to his talents. When we hear of the great learning of a priest, we cannot conclude that he is also fervent and zealous. Secondly, virtue makes on the people a far more favorable impression. Thirdly, virtue spurs on to priestly activity, learning not so. Hence, according to St. Alphonsus, great theologians and canonists hold that in concourses for parishes the most pious should be preferred to the most learned. A zealous pastor of middling attainments will do a hundred times more good than the more learned with less virtue. Pope Pius X in his "Exhortation to the Catholic clergy" lays special stress upon that most excellent science, that of the holiness of life, and quotes as an instance of salutary results for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, the example of the none too learned but holy Pastor of Ars.

The priest is an ambassador; he has received a mission; he is an agent with a purpose and the means clearly defined. He is a good agent only when he endeavors to attain fully the purpose for which he is sent. He must have therefore virtue enough that his ministry procure the glory of God and the salva-

tion of souls. When is that verified? It is certain that mere negative virtue is not sufficient for the purpose, and that not even common positive virtue is sufficient, because the priest must confirm with example his teaching of positive virtue, if he wishes that it be received with docility, and be put into practice with generosity. St. Paul wrote to Titus: "In all things show thyself an example of good works." (II. 7.) Good example is one of the best means for the priest to attain his purpose.

It is certain that common positive virtue is not sufficient, because the teacher must be better qualified than his pupils, the general more capable than his soldiers, the train engineer more expert than his passengers. What confidence could their dependents have in them otherwise? St. Gregory tells us that a priest is wanting in his duties, not only when he keeps company with evildoers, but also when, in leading a good life, he does not surpass the virtuous and good layman. (Inst. 1.) We must conclude then that, as heroic virtue cannot be required of all priests, and as negative or even common positive goodness is not sufficient, his virtue must make a midway station between the two, such as, without causing wonderment, will evoke veneration, give credit and weight to his words, and induce his hearers sweetly to imitation and docility.

All that a priest must do is either a cause or an effect of his holiness. If he fails in defining the

measure of it, he must fail also in the measure of the means necessary to produce it, and of the results that should be expected from it. He will further fail in determining the degree of virtue required of an aspirant to the priesthood. As in spiritual life there are three classes — beginners, proficients, and perfect, so there are three degrees of priestly holiness — low, middling, and high; these degrees include various graduations.

Are there any instruments to weigh and measure moral values? Is there any concrete sign, whereby we can find out, without fear of any mistake, that the virtue of a priest is really of the degree required? Yes; the norm taught us by the Eternal Truth: "You know the tree by the fruit." That norm gives us the two chief qualities of a priest — true zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, and a loving care of perfect continency. We say "true zeal" to distinguish it from spurious imitations, such as:

1. The zeal of those who waste their time in useless lamentations over existing evils and the neglect of good. They had better preach the word of God, administer the Sacraments, and promote all good works in the parish in so far as they are able.

2. We must distinguish true zeal also from the zeal of those who spend themselves in building and decorating churches, and in promoting grand celebrations, all for external worship. All this is indeed

praiseworthy and necessary within the limits of the reasonable, but far less important than procuring the splendor of the living temples of God, as are the souls created and redeemed by Him.

3. True zeal greatly differs from the zeal of those who work hard, but seek the things that are not of Jesus Christ, but their own. Such hard work is of little advantage to souls, whereas their spirit of selfishness, want of devotion, etc., is often a stumbling block to the faithful.

4. True zeal is above all distant from the zeal of the Modernist, who, because he has not the spirit of humility and obedience, is also devoid of true charity, the mother of true zeal.

We treat of the zeal which is born of a burning love of God and of souls, and spurs the priest to consecrate all his strength, and all his time, to this effect that God may be known and loved and that souls may be saved; of the zeal that prevents him from making any attempt against the expressed wishes of his superiors, and especially of the Vicar of Jesus Christ; of the zeal that possesses all the qualities of love, whence it proceeds — kind, patient, unselfish, etc.; of the zeal which, like charity, is an infallible sign of true holiness.

We have mentioned the loving care of perfect chastity as one of the chief glories of a good priest. We mean the loving care of the angelic virtue that proceeds from the high esteem in which the priest

holds it, and not simply from the fear of hell, which he would deserve through the violation of the commandment and of the vow; we do not mean the care of a virtue not loved and perhaps not even spontaneously chosen, but vowed, because courage failed them to leave the road of the sanctuary, although they knew that they were not called.

The above two qualities, rightly understood, prove three important questions:

1. That the priest who possesses them also possesses the holiness required of him for the attainment of his purpose. The people, edified by his perfect chastity, reflected in the modesty of his looks, in the reserve of his behavior, call him an angel and hear and follow his words, whether in the confessional or in the pulpit, as those of an angel. The people understand that he preaches, hears confessions, assists the dying, catechizes the children, etc., not through constraint or self-interest, but with a desire of saving and perfecting souls. They love, respect, and obey him. He is always welcome in their homes; all speak well of him. The priest-haters will call him an exception to the general rule, and pretend that if all were like him, they would change their views. St. Jerome says that one such priest is sufficient to convert all the people of a place.

2. The absence of true zeal and of perfect chastity also proves that the priest who does not have these

two qualities does not possess even in the necessary degree the holiness of life required for the purpose of his priestly calling. This truth seems as clear as the preceding, but its importance forces us to give some of its intrinsic reasons. The careless priest does little or nothing for souls, certainly not enough for one who has received no other mission than that of saving souls; if he works hard, it is for applause or promotion. What unction can his words have? What can be expected of his ministry? Can he be in word and example what he must be — the light of the world and the salt of the earth? The faithful soon notice that the underlying motive of his activity is not their welfare, but self-interest.

Our Lord brought on earth the fire of divine love, the fire of hatred of ourselves, the fire of violence against all our wicked passions. After having spread it himself, He left to us priests the mission of enkindling the whole world with it. That burning zeal is the very marrow of our state.

What else is a careless priest in the pulpit but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal? He preaches himself rather than Jesus Christ. St. Gregory says that unless the Holy Ghost help by grace, the speaker's tongue moves in vain. What is such a priest in the confessional? St. Alphonsus claims that it is much better for him not to hear confessions, because he neglects the four chief duties of a confessor. These are:

a. To help with charity and skill the bashful penitent to sincerity.

b. Tó dispose those that are not disposed and confess through habit.

c. To suggest efficacious means of amendment, especially the thoughts of our last end and of the passion of Our Lord, and to make these considerations easy to the ignorant.

d. To help on the road to perfection those who seem disposed. A careless priest makes matters worse, if to a want of zeal he couples neglect in the jealous custody of the angelic virtue; we do not mean grave and notorious scandals, but any disregard of the virtue, any voluntary exposure to dangers, any liberty which offends the faithful.

The people know that we share the angelic nature in our soul and animal nature in our body; they know how we lower ourselves by yielding to the animal appetite. The people therefore insist that those whom God has placed over them, do prove their dignity by word and example, and love things spiritual to inspire others with the love of them. The faithful, guided by true Christian sentiment, wish to be sure that clean be the heart of those who receive every day the God-Man, pure the hands that touch the immaculate Lamb, chaste the mouth that is reddened by the divine Blood, pure the one to whom the most inmost secrets of the family are en-

trusted. A somewhat founded distrust of the purity of the priest causes the faithful to lose confidence in him, notwithstanding all his other good qualities. There is nothing that exposes the faith of the people to greater danger than to see one of the Church's ministers in the mire of forbidden pleasures. Can the Lord use him as an instrument of His mercy? Pope Pius X wisely warned us that it is not our toil, our learning, our ability, that saves souls, but above all the grace of God, and that only the holiness of our lives can make us fit instruments in the hands of God. In the absence of a good life all is wanting; on the part of the priest, unction, patience, meekness, disinterestedness, good example; on the part of God, the help of His grace will not be forthcoming. We may therefore conclude that a priest wanting in zeal and chastity does not possess holiness in the absolutely necessary degree, and that he is unfit to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He discredits religion and the priesthood, he is the cause of a weakening of the faith, he keeps the people away from religious practices, he sterilizes the germs of a clerical vocation in the young men, and he lessens the efficacy of the ministry of really good priests. Not only is such a one not a really good priest, but he is useless and even injurious to the Church and to souls. If he does a little good, he does a great deal more harm. He is a benefactor who gives five and steals a hundred.

3. True zeal and loving custody of perfect chastity constitute a degree of holiness far superior to the common and ordinary, but it can be attained by all the priests needed in the Church. This is a logical inference from two points of our holy faith: 1. The Church is indefectible according to the promise of its divine Founder; 2. The help of God is never wanting in things necessary, as otherwise the disorders resulting would be imputable to God Himself. If then the Church must exist up to the end of time, and if, to preserve and to extend the kingdom of God on earth, she needs a good number of ministers, it must be possible to find a sufficient number of truly good priests, because priests wanting in zeal and in perfect chastity are no help to the purpose of the Church's existence. This conclusion is in keeping with the teaching of St. Thomas: "God never so abandons His Church, that a sufficient number of ministers be not found for the needs of the people, if the worthy one be promoted and the unworthy discarded" (Sup. III. p. qu. 36 art. IV). He advisedly says "to be found" because to find a thing we must seek it. God wishes coöperation and diligence on our part. God has done His share by planting in the heart of a great number of young men the germ of a clerical vocation; if we desire that germ to develop and bear fruit, we must do our share with a diligent cultivation and a pious education. It is our fault if, for want of careful culture, these germs do not ma-

ture. As in nature God has provided many more plants than are necessary for the needs of man, so also He has implanted many more germs than required in the hearts of young men, because He foresaw that under unfavorable circumstances many of them would not develop. This is not only the teaching of theological reason, but also the experience of the nineteen centuries of Christianity.

Zeal and perfect chastity are fruits of an ardent love of Jesus Christ, which cannot fail in a great number of His followers. The fire with which Christ enkindled the hearts of the faithful will cause them to love God, to love their neighbor, and to love themselves truly.

The thought that an infinitely good and loving God is unknown to and offended by the greater part of mankind, induces me to make Him known, obeyed, and loved. That is true zeal.

The most pure Spouse of my soul feeds among the lilies (Cant. VI. 2). I can make Him feel in me the fragrance of chastity; I shall give Him that token of my love. That is perfect chastity.

Christ tells me that the love of my neighbor is His commandment and a new commandment, and that He considers as done to Himself what I do to my brethren. Many of them, though created for heaven, will blindly precipitate themselves into the infernal abyss. Shall not I exert myself to withdraw them from perdition and lead them to Paradise? I shall

spend myself entirely in this godly work. That is love.

As I could not otherwise consecrate myself entirely to that holy mission, I renounce the pleasures of the flesh for the spiritual fatherhood of souls. Perfect continency!

For the love I must have for myself, Christ has given me to understand the emptiness of earthly things. He has taught me also that if I save a brother, more so if I save many, I shall myself obtain that unspeakable treasure. Shall I neglect so efficacious a means to secure heaven? Behold true zeal!

He has also said: " Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God " (Matt. V. 8). The cleaner I keep my heart the clearer I shall see Him. Shall I instead stain it with the filth of sensual pleasure? No; perfect chastity for me! Christ has given me to understand that my happiness in heaven shall be all the greater as I have abstained from more satisfactions in this world. I wish therefore to be a good bargainer, and renounce momentary sensual pleasures for an exchange infinitely more precious. A strong inducement again to perfect continency.

Thus are the apostolate and celibacy two unmistakable results of the fire which Christ brought upon earth. All know that an endless number of the Nazarene's followers have consecrated and do consecrate themselves to the purpose of procuring the

glory of God and the salvation of souls, with the most jealous custody of angelic purity. The annals of the Church show that wherever the light of the Gospel has penetrated, these two beautiful gems of Catholicism — zeal and chastity — appeared in all their brilliancy.

In order to keep up that divine fire in our hearts to the point where it will produce these two effects, all that is required is to use the means appointed by Our Lord Himself, viz.: frequent meditation of His Passion, and frequent or daily reception of the "corn of the elect and the wine springing forth virgins." (Zach. IX. 17.)

If we priests would press the use of these two means, especially among our boys, a number of clerical vocations would rejoice the Church, and sanctify the people. Many would hasten to help their brethren in heathen countries, that the day may come all the sooner when there will be but one fold and one shepherd. The divine Founder of the Church will never allow that we could tell Him: It is necessary for Thee to make use of any kind of ministers, as Thou canst not find really good ones in sufficient number.

Chapter Sixth

SOME IMPORTANT COROLLARIES OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS

If every one is bound to fulfill the duties of his state, if the essential duty of the priest is to continue the mission of Christ on earth, if to attain that end a degree of virtue is absolutely required, at least such as will effect true zeal and perfect chastity, then it is clear that this degree is not one of supererogation, not a mere counsel but a strict obligation. Hence almost all theologians place holiness among the positive obligations of the clerical state, and prove this obligation with all sorts of solid arguments. It is unnecessary to quote them as they may be found in any moralist, such as Tanquerey, Bucceroni, etc.; but it is necessary to observe that, as the end must be attained, so also the means to acquire, keep, and increase it, must be used. St Alphonsus explained them at length. Marc, a renowned Redemptorist, reduced them to the following nine: 1. A well regulated life that all be done at the proper time. 2. Frequent vocal and mental prayer, especially before and after Mass. 3. Daily spiritual reading, principally of the lives of the saints. 4.

Study of Theology, especially of Moral. 5. Daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin. 6. Daily examination of conscience and frequent confession. 7. Guard of the senses and avoidance of frivolous conversations. 8. Yearly retreat of eight days and one day a month. 9. Constant and filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin, daily recitation of the third part of the Rosary, and a little act of mortification on Saturdays in her honor.

A glance at the fact will reveal that in every diocese there are really good priests; Our Lord uses these and these only for the conservation of His Church on earth. These are not satisfied with the essential degree of sanctity, manifested in true zeal and loving preservation of chastity; they know: 1. That one of the characteristics of true holiness is to progress from virtue to virtue, as the sign of lukewarmness is to fall steadily backward to the very brim of the precipice. 2. That holiness is a mark of the Church, even in the sense of true heroism, and that it is proper for the teachers in Israel to form the greater part of that glorious band of true saints. 3. That, while the degree of sanctity we have explained is indispensable to attain the end, yet it is not in proportion with the superhuman height of sacerdotal ministry and dignity, and that God invites us ever to climb the ladder of perfection. 4. That the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ includes, not only the duty of preserving the faith, but of propagating it,

sometimes with heroic courage in the face of martyrdom. 5. That in the one, as in the other, case the number of souls saved is always in direct proportion to the holiness of the priest. For these reasons the good priest continually advances in perfection by the constant and accurate use of the means.

Unfortunately it cannot be denied that among priests to-day there are some who are good business men, good farmers, good scientists and teachers, good artists, good in improving the material conditions of themselves and of others, but not quite so diligent in improving the condition of the Church and of souls. Sad it is indeed! but sadder is the extreme difficulty of bettering them. The most eloquent discourses on the obligations of the priesthood, even an excellent course of spiritual exercises will leave them indifferent. St. Vincent de Paul used to say that it would be almost a miracle if a bad Catholic were not converted by a retreat. St. Alphonsus said that it would be almost a miracle if a bad priest were converted. This corresponds with what St. John Chrysostom wrote long before them: "Bad laymen are easily corrected, but bad clerics are incorrigible." In fact observe a bad or lukewarm priest after a retreat, from which others have drawn so much inspiration for a better life. Has he modified his vicious habits? Has he begun to make his daily meditation and spiritual reading? Has he placed his conscience under the direction of a pious and learned confessor,

as he commits his health into the hands of the best physician? Has he modified his views tinged with liberalism and modernism? You will find that he is, as before, probably even more hardened in his indifference. Whence that fearful incorrigibility of an indifferent priest? St. Alphonsus thinks that in the case of most of them it is chiefly due to the fact that they entered the ranks without a vocation; they are not where God wanted them; they are fishes out of the water. St. Gregory asks himself the question: If I am a priest without a vocation, what shall I do? The answer is: I must move God by penance to pardon my intrusion into the Sanctuary without a divine call; I must change my conduct, turn away from the vain distractions and pastimes of the world to the more serious practices of a spiritual life, such as, spiritual reading, meditation, etc.; I must work out my salvation, but with toil and violence.

Cardinal Gennari claimed that for over forty years in the priesthood he never had observed any such conversion, and that this hardening of heart, which is the cause of incorrigibility, is usually not acquired after ordination, but is brought over from the seminary. A seminarian, who is not called, in spite of all the light he receives in so many meditations, spiritual readings, sermons, retreats, warnings of his confessor, etc. neither amends his vices, nor changes his mind of becoming a priest. The retreat in preparation for the priesthood shakes him somewhat, and he

proposes to be a good priest, but soon after he begins to overlook his meditation and spiritual reading, does not confess so regularly and then to an easy confessor, links friendship, if possible, with one or more confreres void of zeal, is influenced by a worldly atmosphere . . . all his good resolutions vanish, and slowly but persistently he grows worse. How is he going to amend without a miracle?

Therefore, if curative measures prove useless, all efforts should be made to apply preventive means in the seminary. Great is the responsibility of those in charge. They cannot present, recommend, or admit an aspirant to ordination, unless they can conscientiously say: This young man offers the moral certainty of being called, of becoming an apostle of zeal and an angel of purity. A mere probability is not sufficient. Woe to the young man, woe to the people, and woe above all to themselves, if those in charge of his preparation to the priesthood go against the dictates of a sound conscience! In order to be able to form their conscience at the proper time, they should not overlook three other very important obligations, viz.: *a,* great caution in admitting aspirants to the seminary; *b,* the greatest possible care in educating their minds and their hearts; *c,* unflinching severity in expelling those who do not give signs of vocation.

a. The Council of Trent prescribes that only such candidates should be admitted, whose dispositions

give hope for their perpetual service in the Church's ministry. The great Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical of December 8, 1902, quoting the above prescription of the Council adds a qualificative to the word "hope"; he requires "founded" hope, that is, founded upon the candidate's good dispositions and good behavior, of which the Superiors must be morally certain. Why such caution and diligence? Are not the fruits of a seminary to be expected chiefly from the best moral and intellectual education? No; because even an excellent education is useless, if good dispositions are wanting in the pupils. The seminary is not a reformatory.

b. The greatest possible care should be bestowed upon the cultivation of the minds and the hearts of the seminarians. This demands the highest qualities in those who are charged with imparting that education. However careful the selection be, all seminarians are not exactly angels; they may not have entered with the right spirit and must acquire it.

c. In various documents of Leo XIII and of his successors we read that those who have manifested in the course of their education tendencies not in keeping with a priestly calling should be expelled. He says "in the course of their education" and therefore it makes no difference whether this be noticed at the beginning or towards the end; they should be sent home whenever it is sufficiently

known that their dispositions and their acts are not such as become good seminarians; it amounts to a certain proof that they have no clerical vocation. It is better for the young man; he may become a good Catholic in the world, whereas otherwise he would be, to say the least, an indifferent priest, and expose his soul to serious danger.

The best education of mind and heart is therefore required, but more necessary is the greatest caution in admitting candidates to the seminary, and most necessary the expulsion of those who are not called, yet always with charity and prudence.

To form a just judgment on a vocation or its absence two conditions are indispensable; St. Thomas requires them for every prudent judgment: 1. The exact knowledge of the principles governing the matter; 2. The exact knowledge of the facts to which these principles must be applied. In our case we must have a clear and precise idea of the priesthood, and full knowledge of the individual on whose vocation we must pass judgment. The first can easily be acquired from authors treating of the subject, but the knowledge of the individual is very hard to obtain, because we must discover interior qualities from external signs more or less fallible, and that can more or less be hidden. Are there sure signs of the moral qualities of each seminarian, from which the Superiors can form a morally certain judgment, and so avoid sad mistakes? There must be,

because in the first place such knowledge is necessary, and therefore God must have provided the means; and because in the second place experience shows that it can be acquired, when the proper means are used. Which are these means? They are not alike in all countries. A system advocated for Italy by such saintly bishops as St. Charles Borromeo and St. Alphonsus may not be the most fruitful of results in America. St. Vincent de Paul and the Ven. Olier, founder of the Sulpicians, found in the continual presence of the Superiors among the seminarians the best means to acquire the knowledge of their moral qualities. Owing to the great difference of dispositions and their manifestation in various countries, there is no general system to avoid all mistakes. Yet everywhere the moral certainty of the seminarian's fitness must be acquired at any cost, because it is of supreme importance. If such knowledge is supposed easy or unnecessary, no efforts will be made to acquire it, or only in a superficial way, bare of good results. It is a most stringent duty for the Bishop, the Rector, the Prefects of a seminary to know their men. A great Catholic pedagogue has said of the head of a college that he fills the duties of his office properly when he always knows all that happens even where he is not. The words apply with special force to the Superiors of a seminary, who must pronounce one of two opposed sentences, on the justice or injustice of which de-

pends all the good or all the harm of the Church and of souls: "You are called, go ahead!" "You are not called, leave!" Weakness, human respect, carelessness, will cause terrible pangs at the end, when irreparable mistakes have been made in the selection of the sacred ministers.

To prevent all the mistakes we have called attention to in the preceding chapters, the best contribution comes from a zealous and enlightened confessor. A good confessor is well convinced of the following points: 1. That the glory of God and the salvation of souls demand in our days on the part of the priest the use of the greatest kindness in all and with all, especially with the laity whose faith is weakened and who therefore stray away from the Sacraments; we must treat them with all the more consideration to rekindle their faith and to improve their moral tone. 2. That in all things concerning the formation of the clergy the good confessor is inclined to severity rather than to kindness, because in these cases condescension is not charity, but real cruelty as St. Alphonsus calls it; it can only cause discredit of religion, and the ruin of souls. A good confessor would probably act in the following manner: *a.* If a priest neglects to tend to the holiness of his state and to procure the salvation of souls, the confessor will endeavor with all the means that science, charity, and prudence suggest to lead him to it. If a bad or indifferent priest falls into the hands of a confessor

who indeed wishes to help him on the road of clerical perfection, he will soon leave him. Whenever a good confessor has the opportunity, he exerts himself to bring about a little improvement, which in itself is not a small gain. *b.* In hearing the confession of a seminarian a good confessor will endeavor with the utmost accuracy to train him in solid piety, and in the true ecclesiastical spirit. Should he notice no coöperation on the part of the penitent, and consider him obstinate in his vicious habits; should he foresee that he will never rise to the spirit of sacrifice demanded by the holiness of the priestly state; in a word, when he knows that the seminarian is not called, he must do all in his power to have him give up in time any attempt of intruding into the sanctuary. *c.* The great work of a good confessor is turned to the best advantage with the young men who express a desire of becoming priests. He will try them for a long time and cultivate in them the true spirit with the most diligent care. He will create in them a love for spiritual reading, for daily Communion, and have them practise a tender devotion to the Blessed Mother. He will give them a clear idea of the priesthood, of the high degree of virtue demanded, of a divine call, etc., and be in no hurry to form a judgment about their vocation. The Ven. D. Bosco was of the opinion that, of ten young men expressing a desire to become priests, one or two will carry it out.

It is easy to pass judgment *in foro externo* upon a vocation to the priesthood, when judgment is based upon the necessary conditions; it is exceedingly difficult without them. It is equally certain that not all candidates for the priesthood possess more than ordinary virtue and quasi-angelic purity, and that therefore all are not called. There is no fear, however, that from the admission of the worthy ones only, and the expulsion or withdrawal of the others, a real shortage of priests will result. The words of St. Thomas suffice to prove it: "God will never so abandon His Church that a sufficient number of fit priests will not be found for the needs of the people, if the worthy ones be promoted and the unworthy dismissed.

Chapter Seventh

PRIESTLY SCIENCE

THE good priest is the one who attains fully the purpose of the state to which he has been called, in as much as can reasonably be expected from him. The purpose is: the glory of God through the salvation of souls. We have explained that the end cannot be attained if one of the three constituents of his goodness is lacking — tireless activity, holiness enlightened by knowledge, habitual prayer and study. We now examine the other part of the second constituent — priestly learning.

Theoretically all admit that a priest must be learned as he must be holy. The science required proceeds from the very nature of his state. He is the savior of souls through the teaching of religion and the administration of the Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Penance. How shall he be able to teach, prove, and defend religion, and exercise the ministry, if he is not sufficiently provided with knowledge required to fulfil his duties?

Even in the Old Testament knowledge was necessary for the priests: "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge and they shall seek the law at his

mouth" (Mal. II. 7). Hence God threatened terribly those who neglected to acquire it: "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to me" (Osea IV. 6). How much more necessary then is knowledge to the priests of the New Law, as a ministry has been entrusted to them incomparably more sublime, more important, and more difficult? St. Alphonsus makes the words of Sidonius Apollinaris his own: "Poorly informed physicians kill many; the priests are truly the physicians of the soul." St. Francis de Sales was so convinced of the supreme importance of priestly learning, and of the sad results of priestly ignorance, that he was wont to say: "The learnedness of a priest is the eighth sacrament of the Church." He recognized with all the great thinkers of his day that the ignorance of the clergy at the time of the so-called reformation enabled Protestantism to snatch so many nations from the Church.

We should thoroughly understand what degree of learning, like what degree of holiness, a priest must attain to be a really good priest. Exaggeration in this regard can only cause discouragement and inaction for many, while an undervaluation will produce presumption and inaction, and remove desire of progress. What degree must the minister of God necessarily attain? Two things in this regard are certain. The first is that what we said of the holi-

ness of a priest also applies to his learning. It would be desirable that we were all heroic saints, but this cannot possibly be required of all, nor is it necessary, but at any rate priestly virtue must be above common virtue. Likewise it would be an excellent thing if all of us were most learned, but we cannot require the highest theological knowledge from all, because very few reach that height, and it is not necessary to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls. All that is demanded of each priest in the times in which we live, is that he can decently teach the word of God and administer the Sacraments.

The second point not less certain is that in our day greater knowledge is required than in times gone by. The contempt of the clergy in some places for their ignorance, the nature of the weapons with which faith is attacked in the name of scientific progress, the perversion of religious and moral principles produced by the evil literature of newspapers and books, evidently require of the priest more than superficial culture. Not only great modern writers, but the Popes have repeatedly asserted that, though priests had always to be holy and learned, in our days they must be more holy and more learned. But these ideas of a priest's learning are still too generic and admit of too many interpretations. The courses, as mapped out for clerical students in colleges and seminaries, provide that their knowledge will be at least middling between the highest and the

lowest and nearer to the first, when they present themselves for ordination to the priesthood. They will be sufficiently prepared to be teachers of the people, in matters appertaining to eternal salvation.

So much learning is required everywhere, in the largest cities as in the smallest country parish. Error spreads everywhere; the priest must be able to detect and expose it. He must have the good will of his people; this is subject to the opinion they have of him. If they find him not only good and holy, but also well informed, they will respect him, speak well of him, hear him willingly, and help him to carry out the plans of his zeal.

Some might fear that in but a few young men solid piety will be coupled with a mind bright enough to follow a regular seminary course. To acquire what is necessary a brilliant mind is not required, but a dull one will never do. A medium between the two is sufficient, provided it be combined with good will in the pupil, and directed by the teacher with the right method. Pius X, in his *Normae* for the seminaries in Italy (n. 69), insists that the professors should not neglect those who prove to be backward in class, and convince themselves that the previous lesson has been understood by all. Not all students who pass in law or medicine are geniuses. Many of them may be of very ordinary ability but, by dint of constant and willing study, they reach the goal, though perhaps a little later.

Gutta cavat lapidem. The same will happen to the young levites. Bishop Malou, in his book "Rules on the choice of a state of life," writes: "Ordinary ability is sufficient to the greater number of aspirants to the priesthood, to correspond with the designs of divine Providence, provided they have true solid piety, because this sharpens the mind and will enkindle the love of study. We mean the love that is born of the desire to be helpful to souls, not that which proceeds from ambition for higher places. Frequently a seminarian of minor ability but of solid piety will know more at the time of his ordination than one of a bright intellect without true piety, because the first is perseveringly studious to increase his limited but precious capital."

A good will and a fair memory, however, are not sufficient for the priesthood, and if nature has not given to a young man the faculty of *intelligere* (*intus legere*) he may rest assured that he is not called to the priesthood; a young man with a dull mind is not able to discharge the duties of the priesthood. The natural want of ability is generally incurable. The disadvantage of such a young man would increase in proportion as the level of general culture steadily rises. If God had called him to the priesthood, as St. Thomas teaches, He would have given him the qualities required to discharge its duties. But does not piety make up for the dullness of mind and a want of education? With Father Faber we

might answer: *Nego suppositum,* because he with others believes that high and solid piety is not possible without at least an ordinary mind and much common sense. Their opinion seems to be founded upon solid reasons. Virtue is a product of the will, but of a will enlightened by the mind, which must first show the excellence of the object. St. Alphonsus wrote to a priest that all the Saints have become saints through the thought of eternity. Without being able to form an idea of time and eternity, the thought of the latter would not have the force to cause men to forsake all that is transitory.

Grace ordinarily works on the groundwork of nature. When the mind is too dull, it is incapable not only of ordinary knowledge, but also of high and solid piety; real piety supposes, if not a bright, at least a wise and prudent, intelligence. But supposing that the contrary opinion were true, that great piety is consistent with a dull mind, it may make a very good Catholic layman, a holy lay-brother in a monastery, but it will never make a good priest whose essential duty is to teach religion and administer the Sacraments; this cannot be done without a sufficiently equipped mind.

Does not the example of the holy pastor of Ars prove the reverse? Under one aspect the case of this holy priest does not refer to the matter under consideration, while under another it confirms it. His case belongs to the extraordinary and the mi-

raculous, and therefore cannot be the norm of an ordinary conduct. We read in his life that he possessed heroic virtue from his childhood; heroic charity to the poor, true zeal in teaching catechism to his little companions, heroic in his spirit of sacrifice, self-denial, prayer, union with the divine will, obedience, especially in the seminary, etc. If the curé of Ars was a great saint from his youth, we cannot take him as an example in cases so totally different. Under another aspect the example of the saint confirms what we have said. He was naturally dull of intellect, but as soon as he perceived that this would prevent him from entering the priesthood, to which he felt himself irresistibly attracted, by a divine inspiration he took his recourse to supernatural means, and these freed him from the natural impediment. His biographer tells us how he promised to make a pilgrimage on foot to the tomb of St. Francis Regis to obtain the favor of being able to learn enough to be a good and faithful worker of the Lord. His prayer was heard, as his teacher who had despaired of his success attested. Our Lord, instead of letting one enter without a sufficient knowledge, grants it to him miraculously, if He calls him.

By insisting upon what is necessary there is no fear that true vocations will be lost. Considerable time must be allowed to pass judgment upon the insufficiency of reasoning power. A slow mind should not be taken for a dull one, for which all the efforts

of the teacher would be in vain. A slow mind needs more careful help, but eventually it will grasp the truth, and perhaps more clearly than a brighter intellect, which perceived it promptly. Even if a slow student has to repeat a year to build up a better foundation, he may become a very good priest; the chief point is not how soon he can be ordained, but how well prepared he can be.

All must beware of the mistake so often made of confusing a superior virtue acquired by means of generous and persistent efforts against the pretentions of corrupt nature, with the mask of it, a sort of inborn goodnaturedness, that may be found also in a simpleton. What can be expected of the latter variety, if such are admitted to the seminary and should be ordained? They will soon say farewell to their scientific books, because they find no delight in them, for the reason that they understand too little of them; soon they forget to read Missal and Breviary well, give up spiritual reading, waste their time loitering about, and finally become totally unfit for the priestly ministry.

Any author treating of ecclesiastical duties points out the necessity of continuous study. We will briefly state some of the reasons. Priests will naturally forget many of the things they have learned, because memory acts as a lamp; unless oil be continually added, it will go out. It may happen that one who, in class, always carried away the first prizes,

after five or six years could not pass an easy examination. Two or three years may have been devoted partially to Hebrew, but after a few years' total neglect one can hardly distinguish the letters of the alphabet. Frequently it happens that new laws, new decisions, changed circumstances, require that the knowledge formerly acquired be modified or completed. Add to that the fact that ever so many difficult and intricate cases are presented to a priest in parish work, which demand immediate solution, without recourse to books or to a well informed confrere. A physician is bound to read up if he wishes to be up-to-date; and should not the spiritual physicians of souls be obliged to keep up study? Lame indeed is the excuse of any priest who claims to have no time.

But there is another, more serious, reason. It is the absolute necessity of preserving the faith sound and alive within us. We are human also and more than others assailed by the infernal enemy; he knows that by winning us over he gains many more. The sharper the mind, the keener we feel the force of the objections we hear and read against faith, which the devil suggests, or which spontaneously present themselves. Woe to us if, in the poisoned atmosphere which we are compelled to breathe, we have not a sufficient antidote! We say " sufficient " because a veneer of apologetics is not enough.

We may apply to Dogmatic Theology what Bacon

said of Philosophy: "Studied superficially it distances us from God; studied deeply it leads us to God." If the faith of a priest is a little shaky, his charity cannot be strong, because the one is the foundation of the other. The study of Dogmatic Theology enkindles the love of God, without which one cannot be a true priest, a man of faith, of charity and of sacrifice.

We should study: 1. With the right intention of knowing and loving God better, and have Him known and loved by others; of defending religion; of discharging our priestly duties, especially in the confessional, so important and so difficult that we can never believe ourselves capable enough. 2. With a judicious selection of the subjects, preferring those which are more appropriate to our purpose, and leaving aside those which are only a bait to curiosity and vain erudition. 3. With order, attending first to what is more necessary. 4. With courage and perseverance, even when we are not bright, remembering that a continued drop of water will bore a hole in a rock, even if up to now we have neglected it; better late than never. 5. With an humble diffidence of our own opinions. Accursed pride, the mother of modernism, which pits our limited vision against that of the Church, and its infallible head, and which is causing the loss of so many souls!

Chapter Eighth

PRIESTLY PRAYER

THE priest must be a man of prayer. Prayer is the first link in the chain of good qualities that constitute sacerdotal goodness. If he is a man of prayer, he will undoubtedly be a man of study, of true piety, of angelic purity, and tireless, prudent and disinterested zeal. Give me a man of prayer, said St. Vincent de Paul, and I declare him good for all. If he is not, all his other qualities are only appearances, or at any rate insufficient for the attainment of the priestly mission. This is the chief concern of a priest, and the most important in the formation of a candidate for the priesthood. This is of supreme importance as an inducement for ourselves to be always good priests, and to judge of the vocation of an aspirant to our ranks. If we are sure that he has not the spirit of prayer, we may be sure also that he is not called to the priesthood, because the positive goodness, superior to the common, which authors consider the fundamental sign of a vocation, can only be the result of the spirit of prayer.

We must first explain what we understand by a man of prayer, and by assiduousness in prayer.

a. By prayer we do not mean so much vocal prayer as mental prayer or meditation. "If vocal prayer is not well made, it is a useless fatigue of the tongue," says St. Theresa. Meditation is a necessary condition to good vocal prayer. The knowledge that only salvation is necessary and that all the rest is vanity, the ardent desire of the means to save ourselves, the conviction of our own unworthiness and of God's mercy can result only from the assiduous meditation of the great truths of faith. In meditating we pray and we pray well; we obtain what we ask — holiness, perseverance, and life eternal; without meditation vocal prayer would become like that of the Pharisee. A great maxim of the saints is that a sinful life must disappear with meditation. We consider as a necessary adjunct to meditation the reading of spiritual books (Sacred Scripture, the *Following of Christ,* the *Philothea* of St. Francis de Sales, etc.), and of the lives of the saints, especially ecclesiastics. The meditation of our last ends fills the soul with a holy fear of God, that of the Passion of Our Lord and of the Holy Eucharist inflames it with divine love. The soul feels herself moved then to tread generously the path of virtue. In order not to miss the road, we take a guide in a spiritual book and in the example of the saints, and we say with St. Augustine: "If they, why not I?" To be productive of good results, meditation and spiritual reading must be supplemented by examina-

tion of conscience, particular and general. This will tell whether we carried out our good resolutions, how we progress, what obstacles must be removed, what help we need. When we speak of a man of prayer, we do not mean one who performs the above exercises mechanically, but one who practises them for his own benefit, and would spend all his time in them, if God did not call him away to other duties. To be a man of prayer, one must have the spirit of prayer, which is the life of the ecclesiastical life, and therefore the germ and the best sign of an ecclesiastical vocation.

b. In the selection of the subject, we must remember that we are in need of fear and of love, and that fear usually precedes love. "Fear," says St. Augustine, "is the needle that pricks; love is the thread that unites the soul with God." In the beginning therefore the subject matter of our meditation should be more frequently the consideration of our last ends.

c. Concerning the duration of our daily meditation, the saying of St. Louis is very true: Our perfection will be in proportion to our meditation, because the effect is proportionate to the cause. We read of the saints that they spent many hours daily in that holy exercise. It would be a mistake for any priest to think that the celebration of Holy Mass, the devout recitation of the Breviary, and the offering to God of all his priestly work of the day, can take the place of

meditation. God sent St. Theresa to a Bishop, over-anxious to give all his time to souls, to warn him of the dangerous pitfall. St. Bernard and many others tell us that no one can continue to be a channel, if he ceases to receive from the source. The time we devote to meditation and spiritual reading, even when it curtails somewhat other parochial work, increases the force of our efforts hundredfold. A few words of a fervent priest do more good than twenty sermons of an indifferent one. We may conclude that a priest should spend as much time in meditation and spiritual reading as he needs to make progress in the spiritual life; first, because considering his sublime dignity he can never be holy enough; second, because in virtue we fall back when we cease to move onward.

d. There are various methods of meditating; each has its own advantages; but each also may be rather an obstacle than a help, when we observe it too closely, in the same way as rhetoric is to an orator too liege of its rules. The following useful rules occur in all methods: 1. Begin by placing ourselves in the presence of God, asking pardon of our sins and the grace to meditate profitably. 2. Not to read much, but stop where the mind and the heart find their reflections and affections. 3. Among the affections practise preferably acts of love and of sorrow. 4. Never end a meditation without having made some particular and practical resolution. Above all

pray much that the Lord may perfect His love in us, give us final perseverance, and the grace to carry out our good resolutions through the mediation of our Blessed Mother.

e. In spiritual life we all stand greatly in need of a spiritual director; an effort should be made to find the best. Without his aid even a man of prayer may be a man of frequent and dangerous illusions.

Let us now proceed to consider that most important proposition, to-wit, that a priest to be really good must be a man of prayer. No man can be adorned with truly robust and superior virtue, unless he be a man of prayer in the sense we have given above; but a priest must have such virtue, superior to the common; therefore a priest cannot be really good unless he be a man of prayer. The major of this syllogism is psychologically and theologically certain. That the will follows the intellect is an axiom admitted by all philosophers. As man is irresistibly desirous of happiness, he will not seek it where he does not think it can be found. If actually he does seek it in disorder and sin, as frequently happens, this is because he is more or less unaware that he cannot find in them but bitterness and unhappiness. Aristotle, though not enlightened by faith, realized that all sin is in some way the result of ignorance. Therefore the only way to prevent the mistakes of the will is to enlighten the intellect. To redress crooked desires we must correct false

ideas; to reform our ways of acting we must first reform our ways of thinking. By way of illustration we might ask: What does a lawyer do to obtain a favorable sentence of the judge for his client? He endeavors to convince him with all sorts of arguments that justice, equity, the existing laws, public opinion, demand such sentence. He is fully aware that unless he can impress these arguments on the judge's mind, he cannot hope to gain his case. Cicero wrote truthfully: "If I am an orator, I owe it to philosophy, not to rhetoric." He meant: If I succeed in triumphing over the will, I must first succeed in convincing the intellect, not with rhetorical figures, but with close and irrefutable reasoning.

How can we priests be able to reason so as to convince fully ourselves and others? Only by meditating. The human spirit is not, like the angel, an intellectual being in the proper sense; it is rational and discursive. The angel intuitively sees the truth; man has at his command only the first principles, and their immediate consequences; he must acquire all other truths through analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, comparison, reflection, all operations proper to meditation. So does the lawyer try to acquire accurate knowledge of the facts and their circumstances. He studies the law in its bearing on the facts, he reads the comments on it and the decisions of other courts, he foresees the objections and prepares the answers; only then he feels

that he will handle successfully the case of his client. In spiritual matters the priest must follow the same process, if he wishes to avoid mistakes. How can he hope to trace convincingly the line between virtue and vice — the beauty, the value, the happiness of the one, and the horridness, the vileness, and the deplorable consequences of the other — unless he meditate? How can he subjugate rebellious and furious passions without a careful and assiduous meditation?

Let us now apply these natural truths of reason and experience to the supernatural order of grace and of our coöperation. When the soul shall be freed of the distractions and the attractions of the senses, it will irresistibly tend to its First Beginning and Last End — to the infinite Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Hence if God does not admit her either for a time or for ever, this privation will be the worst of her sufferings. When she sees Him, not in a mirror, but face to face, she will be so taken up with admiration and love that it would be practically impossible to offend Him. Her liberty is not essentially destroyed, but the possibility of abusing it through sin is excluded. She places all her happiness in consuming herself to please that infinitely lovable Being by loving and singing His mercies for all eternity.

So long as man's soul shall be united to the body, so long as he feels all the instincts which he has in common with the brutes, so long as he finds himself

surrounded with the attractive deceptions of the world, of the devil, and of the flesh, he hardly realizes his noble nature, his sublime destiny, the true object of his happiness. As a result of original sin, all the appetites of his animal nature rebel against the laws of his mind; they will not hear of order, justice, future reward; they want to feel happy in riches, honors, and especially sensual pleasures. Shall man lose the battle which he must fight all through life? No; the Creator, who impressed upon him His own image and likeness, has furnished him the means to win. How? With the wonderful light of faith, which so directs as to enable him to pass his days in holiness and justice and so win the fight.

There is, however, a condition to the force of enlightening faith, to enable us to lead a holy life. It is that the truths which it teaches be meditated upon, attentively and assiduously, because it teaches things that cannot be seen with our bodily eyes. The soul can only perceive them by thinking of them, by considering their nature, their grandeur, their consequences; in other words, by meditating upon them. Then indeed can we see them clearly enough to force us to observe the laws of God in spite of all our wicked passions. Without that meditation, animal nature has the upper hand; life will be an uninterrupted series of mistakes, and the soul will be lost. As St. Augustine remarks, if one must

travel a road with many ditches, he cannot help falling into them, even in daytime, if he walks with his eyes shut. So if one does not meditate, he will fall into sin, even if he has the light of faith. Some ascetic writers think that without meditation of the eternal truths, one could not, without a miracle, live as a Christian; St. Alphonsus quotes the above from Gerson. An attentive and assiduous meditation will unmistakably cause us to abstain from sin; an occasional meditation will not have the same effect.

The Holy Ghost has clearly taught us the necessity of meditation: " In all thy works, remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin " (Eccli. VII. 40). The assiduity of it could not have been expressed more forcibly — in all thy works — He does not say: believe but remember; think over what you believe; He does not speak of the last end in general, but of your own, your death, the judgment which Jesus Christ will pass upon you, the glory of heaven which is offered to you, the torments of hell which you will endure if you abuse God's mercy. If you comply with the warning, you will never sin, were you to live a thousand years on earth. Such meditation must be assiduous, because the struggle never ceases.

Meditation, therefore, is necessary to avoid grievous sin, but have we acquired then high and solid virtue? Certainly not. To fear God as rewarder of

good and avenger of evil is indeed the beginning, but it is not properly wisdom itself, that is, ardent charity or the science of righteous living. That sublime wisdom consists in the following two things, which help one another, and advance at a like pace: 1. In loving God infinitely lovable and infinitely kind to us with all our heart. 2. In despising and holily hating ourselves with all that this conviction imports. To correspond always with grace and always to resist nature to please the infinite goodness is true and sublime wisdom — a virtue far surpassing ordinary goodness.

If meditation is necessary to enable us to abstain from sin, it is all the more necessary to attain a much nobler purpose. How can we come to the knowledge and the love of God and the contempt of ourselves, without adding to the meditation of our last end that upon the goodness of God, manifested to us especially in the Incarnation, the Life, and the Passion of His Son? Without considering well and constantly what we should have done and what we have done? In a word, without much meditation and much spiritual reading?

The Doctors of the Church confirm the above with numerous comparisons. The truths of faith, they say, are the flint-stone, meditation is the steel that produces from it the sparks which must enkindle in our hearts the fire of holy fear and ardent love. They are the grain of mustardseed, which, when

simply swallowed, has no taste; the attentive consideration of them is the mastication, which causes tears for the sharpness of its taste. The truths of faith are the seed, meditation is the moisture and the heat that make it sprout, and bring forth copious fruit. To impress upon us that we must practise both mental and vocal prayer, they tell us that we need two feet to walk. We repeat the words of the angelic St. Louis: "Our perfection will be in proportion to our meditation." All the Saints were convinced of it.

It seems then proved to evidence that whether we consider virtue in its beginning and foundation — the fear of God — or in all its beauty — ardent charity — no one can have true and solid virtue, much superior to the ordinary, unless he be a man of prayer with all that the term implies. We have explained that the holiness of the priest must be such as to combine angelic purity with tireless zeal; that he should find his delights in spending himself and all his gifts in the salvation of souls. Hence follows that a priest cannot be really good, unless he be a man of prayer. All other constituents of his goodness practically rest upon this. We may therefore conclude that the priest, who is a man of prayer, possesses all the qualities required for the ministry — holiness, learning, tireless zeal, prudence, spirit of sacrifice, disinterestedness; by them he attains the purpose of his calling — the glory of God and the

sanctification of souls. Pius X tells us in his "Exhortatio ad clerum Catholicum" that all these qualities are lacking in a priest who is not a man of prayer. The attentive reading of that exhortation will prove useful to all.

Chapter Ninth

THE SEMINARIANS MUST ACQUIRE THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

ONE who was not a man of prayer in the seminary, the school of prayer, where every thing helps to meditate, will not be a man of prayer, barring a miracle, in the midst of the turmoil of the world. Therefore woe to the young man who leaves the seminary after ordination without the spirit of prayer! All spiritual writers teach that he should not be raised to Holy Orders without it. St. Bernard warned his former pupil Pope Eugene III to beware of receiving and ordaining those who had not practised mental prayer. St. Charles Borromeo demanded before ordination a serious examination on this point; he wished to be convinced that the seminarian knew how to make a meditation. If he did not discover in the candidate the spirit of prayer, he expected nothing from him and would not ordain him, however learned and bright he might be.

The germ of prayer, which is at the same time the germ of the ecclesiastical spirit, and therefore the first of the signs of a clerical vocation, must be brought to maturity by the spiritual directors of the

future priests. The Lord creates the spiritual like the material germs, but He demands human coöperation for their development. The directors should do so with the most lively interest, because in doing so they comply with their duties, which may be summed up: 1. In discovering and dismissing those who are not called; 2. In properly preparing those who are called. The easiest and best way to discover that one is not called is the uselessness of our best efforts to make of him a man of prayer. The shortest and most efficacious way to prepare one that is called to the priesthood is to help him develop the spirit of prayer. How shall we do this? St. Charles answers: By endeavoring to enkindle in him the desire and the love of mental prayer: 1. by explaining to him clearly that meditation is a thing of the utmost importance; 2. by teaching him an easy and practical method to meditate well. The blanks of these two points in the minds of most people, including ecclesiastics, is the cause that but few practise it. We will therefore endeavor to prove the importance and the facility of it. Once the seminarian has acquired the love of it, he will meditate well, and make rapid progress in spiritual life, and he will never give it up for the rest of his life, and, what is also important, on the pulpit and in the confessional he will induce others to meditate.

Concerning the importance of mental prayer, we must observe:

1. That all sins are committed either for a desire to enjoy or for reluctance to suffer, like every virtuous act proceeds from either depriving oneself from a pleasure or bearing a pain. As the will invariably chooses beween two delights, the one which the intellect represents the greatest, so also between two pains the one which the mind judges the least. If we wish to abstain from vice and to practise virtue, we must often compare present pleasures and sorrows with the future delights and pains. How can this be done when we cannot see the things, good and evil, beyond the grave? The answer is plain: The light of faith enables us to see what our eyes cannot see. With that aid comparison is easy, and the difference of the eternal joys and sufferings with the shortlived enjoyments and pains is apparent, and the selection of the first must reasonably be presented to the will. St. Augustine acknowledged, after the experiences of a sinful life, his folly for having made so much of what is nothing, and for not having made enough of what is all.

2. Our heart cannot love what the mind does not represent as lovable, a thing or a person. St. Paul writes that Christ, by His love for us, forces us to love Him in return; He bids us to love Him because He loved us first, although He foresaw our wickedness and our ingratitude. St. Bonaventure tells us that the wounds of Christ strike a stony heart and inflame an icy soul. How can this be if we never

look at the wounds, if we do not reflect that they are the effect of His love to deliver us from eternal misery? How can we ever acquire a holy hatred of ourselves (without which the love of God will never enter our hearts) if, at the sight of the excessive love, we do not consider our exceedingly great malice and ingratitude? "Meditation is," says St. Alphonsus, "the blessed furnace wherein the fire of divine love is kindled and kept burning." Divine love will cause us to resolve never to offend God, and to please Him in all things.

3. Is it enough to make these good resolutions to see them put into practice? Faith teaches us that we cannot keep the law of God and much less acquire high virtue without His help. We obtain that help through prayer well made and the Sacraments well and frequently received. The worst is, says St. Alphonsus, that without mental prayer we do not practise vocal prayer. Without mental prayer we do not see the needs of our soul, do not know well the dangers to salvation, nor the means to overcome temptations; without it we do not see the need of prayer, we would end by giving it up and we are lost. For the same reason we would not receive the Sacraments often enough nor with the proper dispositions. Abandoned to ourselves, we would not have the strength to lead a good Christian life.

Therefore without meditation the light fails to see clearly the nothingness of the goods and evils of this

world, and the importance of the future goods and evils; hence we could not have the holy fear of the Lord, nor His love. Without these how can we save ourselves? How could we expect to continue the saving and sanctifying mission of Christ?

The young levites should be made fully aware of the consequences of the above reflections. The worst temptation to which they will afterwards as priests be exposed is that of giving up or restricting their meditation and spiritual reading. Ascetic writers tell us that the devil does not suggest to priests any other temptation with more cunning, because he knows that if they continue to meditate, they will save themselves and save a number of others.

Let us consider a few of the frauds of the old deceiver and murderer to attain his end:

1. The study of the priest to prepare for his sermons and for his duties in the confessional is a continual meditation of the great truths of religion; he can therefore dispense himself of the consideration of these same truths in meditation.

Answer. Not at all! That study is for the good of others, like the meditation of the lawyer to defend his client, and of the physician to save his patient. These meditations increase their legal or medical knowledge, but without making the one more just or the other more healthy. So also does the study of a priest increase his religious knowledge, but it does not produce, preserve, or increase holiness; all great

preachers and learned theologians are not saints. The only meditation that will make and keep us holy is true mental prayer, that is, the holy intercourse of God speaking to the soul desirous of hearing His voice, and of the soul speaking to God and applying to herself His divine words; that intercommunion in which she loves Him, thanks Him, regrets having offended Him, makes good resolutions for the carrying out of which she asks His help. From his study and other ministerial duties to others, the good priest undoubtedly endeavors to draw spiritual benefit for himself, especially through the pure intention of doing all to please God. Only the man of prayer will have such an intention. If the priest is not a man of prayer, he will perform his duties with little or no benefit to others, and often to the detriment of himself and of others.

2. What more excellent prayers than Holy Mass and the Divine Office? Do not the Missal and the Breviary contain the most beautiful, the grandest, the most efficacious aspects of religion? What prevents making meditation and spiritual reading out of them?

Answer. Do it and all will be in order. Take a couple of hours to say Mass, and at least as many to recite your Breviary, stop often to make considerations and reflections, pious aspirations, resolutions and prayers. You may dispense with any other books of devotion; you will be a man of prayer without

them. Is it done? Is it feasible? Some saints have done so, after they had meditated first and felt insatiable in their desire to hear God and to speak to Him. A priest who does not make his daily meditation, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, etc., celebrates Mass and recites his Breviary not by way of meditation but not even with the necessary devotion. Experience is more eloquent than discussion.

3. Meditation and spiritual reading are pleasing to God, but works of zeal are more pleasing to Him. The time you allot to meditation and spiritual reading is taken from your ministerial duties, of which to-day there is such need.

Answer. No; it is not a subtraction but an addition you make. The hours you spend in the ministry are not counted but weighed. Six hours' work of a spiritual man are worth more to the people than eight or eighty of a lukewarm priest, granting that the absence of meditation and of spiritual reading has left him indifferent only, and not, as is usually the case, more harmful than beneficial, even if the indifferent priest were a more indefatigable worker than the fervent one, which reason and experience do not admit. The exercise of zeal is certainly pleasing to God, but true zeal is, according to St. Thomas, the effect of an ardent love of God and of souls. That ardent love in turn is the effect of meditation; therefore to be a man of zeal one must be a man of meditation. Hence it is not exact to say that the exercise

of zeal pleases God more than mental prayer. On the contrary, mental prayer is above all pleasing to God, because it produces love, the mother of zeal. What can the exercise of the ministry be worth without zeal?

4. Often there is a conflict between the three duties of a priest — prayer, study, and ministry. As there are no fixed rules for such cases, it would seem that we could then omit or shorten prayer in order not to neglect our other duties.

Answer. It is not true that there are no general rules for such cases. They are taken from the double end at which a priest must always aim — the end of man, which is to love God, and the end of our state, which is to induce others to love Him. Prayer, especially meditation, is necessary for the attainment of both these purposes, while study is properly required for the second only. For this reason also is study less important than prayer because, as all ascetic theologians tell us, holiness of life is more conducive to the salvation of souls than the learning of the ministers. Therefore St. Alphonsus concludes that a priest should never give up meditation for study, nor even shorten the time, except in cases where study is actually and urgently necessary, and then only by way of exception. The best and ordinary method to divide the time between prayer, study, and ministry is to harmonize the three duties in such a way as to attain, in as large a measure as

possible, the end of man and the end of a priest. Alas! too often time fails for all three purposes because we are not good stewards of time. If we were to take eleven hours in the twenty-four for sleep, meals, and recreation, we still have five for Mass, Breviary, meditation, spiritual reading, and other devotions, and eight for study and works of the ministry.

It is surprising how much time we could save with the following little precautions:

1. Take care of the spare moments. 2. Use the telegraphic style in correspondence. 3. Break off adroitly useless conversations. 4. Beware of unnecessary and useless visits. 5. Refuse work that is not priestly and that can be entrusted to others. 6. Stick immovably to the rational rule: first what is necessary, then what is useful, and last what is pleasing. 7. Keep your order of the day, unless charity bids you to change it.

Chapter Tenth

MEDITATION AND HOW TO MAKE IT

TO enkindle in our seminarians a great love for meditation, we must first impress upon them the supreme importance of it, and then convince them of its delightful ease. To attain that purpose we must give them a genuine idea of meditation, and then teach them the simplest method.

Nature of Meditation. Meditation is a sweet colloquy between God and the soul; in it we must attentively listen to His words, and then tell Him what His words compel us to say. These are the essential parts of a meditation: "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me" (Ps. LXXXIV. 9). "I will speak to my Lord" (Gen. XVIII. 27). 1. Reflect upon one of the truths which the Lord has taught us through His Church. 2. Make acts of thanksgiving, love, sorrow for the past, resolutions for the future, prayer, etc., according to the subject we consider. The second part is a sequel of the first, because the word of the Lord is a light, a burning flame, a penetrating sword. The resolutions and prayers will be the affections of the soul enlightened by that light, enkindled by that flame, and wounded

by that sword. Affections, resolutions, and prayers are the purpose of the meditation; without them reflection on the word of God might be a study, but not a spiritual exercise. The other parts — preparation, conclusion, and thanksgiving — are accessory, yet advisable. It is not necessary that the two essential parts follow one another; they are interwoven and alternating as the grace of God invites and leads us, without any established rules, to which we should hold; like a son converses with his father.

There are various methods to meditate well. The most complete is certainly that of St. Ignatius; but there are other of the Ven. Olier, of St. Francis de Sales, of St. Alphonsus and others; each one differs more or less from the other. The variety proves that they do not constitute the essence of the meditation; these methods are of rather recent date and meditation was always necessary.

There are various degrees of meditation. This variety depends upon the degrees of intelligence, of culture, especially religious culture, on the longer or shorter practice, on the greater or smaller abundance of graces, on a more or less faithful correspondence with grace.

Meditation is easy for all. It may be hard to follow a given method for one not sufficiently instructed, but meditation is not difficult for any one, if he makes it in the manner and in the degree suitable to him. The good God does not command the

impossible; willing the salvation of all, He is pleased with any one using his best efforts. He has given us a mind and a heart chiefly, we might say solely, to know and to love Him. The use of the creatures should have no other object than to lead to the love of the Creator. It would be absurd to imagine that God has enabled us to reflect upon what another tells us about the vain and fleeting joys of this world, and made us incapable of reflection upon what He himself has told us of the exceedingly greater concerns of eternal life. He bids us to reflect on our last end, on the sufferings of His Son. He complains that "all the land has been made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart" (Jer. XII. 11). St. Theresa said: in meditation the point is not to think much, but to love much. Subtle and deep thoughts may be rather a danger than a help, because they may kill the main purpose of the meditation. Poor humanity, if only learned theologians and highly cultured people could meditate! Meditation is not only easy but delightful.

Meditation is a colloquy between the soul and God, and the Lord Himself assures us that conversing with Him brings no tediousness, but joy and gladness (Wis. VIII. 16). The reason of it is clear. St. Augustin says that the soul desires nothing more earnestly and finds in nothing else more consolation and joy than in the knowledge of the truth. Meditation precisely makes us know the highest truths —

what God is, what we are, what all earthly goods are, what our last end is, how important it is to attain it, etc. In meditation the soul opens her eyes to see what she believed but did not see; it is like receiving a new revelation; she wonders how she could have been so slow in opening her eyes. The result is unspeakable joy, lively gratitude to the Lord for the favor of enlightening her, and in a measure a foretaste of heaven. This delight springing forth from the knowledge of the truth is enhanced by the love of God enkindled during the meditation. St. Alphonsus assures us that the saints are undoubtedly the happiest people on earth. Our eternal happiness consists in seeing, loving, and possessing God; the nearest approach to it in this valley of tears, in so far as we are capable of it, consists in the selfsame object. Meditation makes us see that infinite God through faith; it makes us love Him ardently, and in a way gives us to possess Him by the union with Him through grace. Nothing in the world can disturb that peace and initial blessedness. The man of prayer, while holding the false goods of this world in generous contempt, feels happy in the possession of real riches, and becomes always more attached to the exercise of mental prayer and appreciates it more than any other treasure. The great Suarez went so far as to say: "I would not exchange a quarter of an hour's meditation for all the knowledge I have acquired in so many years of study."

How to make a Meditation. To do a thing well, however easy it be, a little instruction is always useful. Those called to the sacred ministry should not only be advised to meditate, but be taught to meditate well.

There are various methods of meditation. That of St. Ignatius is the most elaborate and the most complete; those of St. Francis de Sales and of St. Alphonsus are the easiest. We give here the method of St. Alphonsus. He advises it to all, even to the laity, and advises that confessors teach it to their penitents.

Meditation contains three parts: the preparation, the meditation proper, and the conclusion.

In the preparation we elicit an act of faith in the presence of God, of humility with an act of contrition, and we ask for light. We should say: 1. O my God, I believe that thou art present with me and I adore Thee. 2. O my God, I deserved to be in hell now; I am sorry for having offended Thee. 3. Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus and Mary, enlighten me during this meditation that I may derive benefit from it. Add a request to the Mother of God and your Guardian Angel for that light and immediately proceed with the meditation.

Select as matter for meditation that which most appeals to your devotion. Often meditate upon the last ends of man — death, hell, eternity, — and on the Passion of Our Lord. The chief parts of a medi-

tation are not merely thoughts, but affections, prayers, resolutions. By affections we understand acts of adoration, thanksgiving, humility and the like, but above all acts of contrition and love. Love is the golden chain that unites us with God; every act of love secures grace, as the Lord has said: I love those who love me. Acts of love may be the following: O my God, I love Thee with all my heart; I esteem Thee above all; I give myself entirely to Thee; Do with me as Thou wilt; etc. The chief thing during the meditation is frequent short prayers for light, a happy death, perseverance in the grace of God, and entire submission to the will of God; this is really perfect love. At the end of the meditation make some practical resolutions, such as, to avoid your usual mistake, or to mortify yourself in one particular thing, or to have patience with one particular person, etc. General resolutions, such as: I want to behave well, or I want to be a Saint, are of no benefit.

Then conclude by thanking God for the lights received, by deciding to carry out your resolutions, and by asking the help of Jesus and Mary to do that. St. Alphonsus recommends that before the end of each meditation we say a prayer for the souls in Purgatory, and for the poor sinners.

The spiritual director in a seminary should explain all the parts, and then convince himself that all have understood the method thoroughly. The

adaptation, however, will not be the same for all, because the grace of God does not lead all the same way, but according to natural and supernatural aptitudes. Grace leads some principally through fear, others through love; some are impressed by one simple maxim, others by a whole tissue of truths; some run through the purgative and the illuminative way rapidly, others less generous move with pitiful slowness. It is then the director's duty to study carefully the character, the education of each seminarian, his habits and his needs, and to help him that the measure of grace and of generosity be ever on the increase. This individual adaptation would be easier and more efficacious, if each seminarian had his own book of meditations, and could select his own matter. A book read for all cannot be suitable for each individual, because they are not all of the same degree of intelligence and culture, and because God may lead them in different ways. Haste is the great enemy of the spirit of prayer; St. Francis de Sales calls it the pest of spiritual things. Meditation and spiritual reading are two exercises that help one another. A book for either should be a help, not a loss. There is nothing more ruinous to meditation and spiritual reading than anxiety to read much. We must make the meditation ourselves; we must make a spiritual reading almost like a meditation, resting peacefully wherever the mind and the heart find food for use-

ful reflections, devout affections, resolutions and prayers. We must do like the bees, and not leave a flower as long as we find honey to gather. Ascetic writers tell us that spiritual reading to produce good results should not be done hastily, as if we were reading a newspaper. The rain that comes down in torrents does not penetrate nor fertilize the earth, like a gentle shower. Our spiritual reading should be like the drinking of a hen; she drinks a little and raises the head, and repeats the operation; we should read a little and then look up to God. If we are ourselves men of prayer, we will induce many others to try that holy exercise with the greatest advantage to themselves.

If the doors of the sanctuary are to be opened to holy young men only, will there be a sufficient number of priests? Holy Scripture, all the Fathers of the Church and its Doctors, the general and particular Councils, the Roman Pontiffs, all wish that holy young men only be admitted. They order it, because the very nature of the priesthood demands it, especially in our times. One acquainted with present social conditions knows full well that a clergy with little holiness and little learning will not save humanity.

Our enquiry so far shows what a truly good clergy is; let us now try to find out from the same sources what is meant by a sufficiently numerous clergy.

Chapter Eleventh

HOW TO DETERMINE WHETHER THERE IS A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF PRIESTS

AS authors differ in regard to the relation of causality between the number of priests and the qualities demanded of them, so also there is a difference of opinion concerning the criteria for regulating the number. Is there a precise and authentic rule to guide us in this regard? Holy Church could not leave us without such guidance. As she clearly determined, especially in the Council of Trent, the degree of virtue and knowledge required of her sacred ministers, so she has also defined the number by declaring that a Bishop should ordain only those whom he considers necessary, or at least useful in his own diocese. The wording of the decree of the Council of Trent (ch. 16) clearly indicated that the criterion, which it reëstablished, was not new in the Church.

Notwithstanding the injunction, or rather declaration, of the Council, the old system remained in vogue for two centuries, and in some countries ten times more than the required number were ordained. The great Pope Benedict XIV felt compelled to

treat in his immortal work " De Synodo Diocesana " the question of numbers. He gave us rules to obviate that great disorder, and illustrated the full import of the Council's decree. He calls a wise executor of the Council's mind that Bishop, who carefully considers the benefices of his diocese, which he can confer. That will show him how many priests the diocese needs for the parishes or other churches, for the performance of divine worship and the administration of the Sacraments, to provide confessors for the convents and chaplains for hospitals and other pious places. So must, he adds, that necessity or usefulness of the Council of Trent be understood. To the above must be added several more for the sodalities, clubs, and other organizations, which social conditions have made necessary. In most dioceses of the United States there is still penury of priests; but here like everywhere else fewer good priests will do more practical work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, than many times their number of indifferent ones. Let us apply the difference to two of the chief duties of a priest: preaching the word of God and hearing confessions.

Tertullian in his time thought that man was naturally a Christian, because the word of God when properly treated makes him realize the truth, the beauty, and the advantages of Christianity; it finds in his soul a sweet echo, which causes him to embrace it with enthusiasm. The human mind is made

for the truth; the word of God makes him know it, and induces him to love and practise it. He naturally craves for happiness, of which the word of God is the source.

What shall we say of the Sacrament of Penance? Give them good confessors and you will have an entire reformation of all Christians. (St. Pius V.) The sight of a big sinner may frighten; induce him to confess to an able and pious confessor, and he will rise full of joy, and return regularly to the confessional. We notice the difference in a parish after a two weeks' mission by good and zealous priests; the word of God and confession have enlightened, purified and sanctified the people. These two means are at the disposal of every priest. God will bless during a mission the efforts more profusely; probably new voices make a greater impression, but the means are substantially always the same. When the good priest uses them in the habitual care of a parish, his apostolate becomes a continual mission, gathering durable fruits. They will be all the more copious and lasting as his ability and his zeal are greater. St. Alphonsus remarks that, as all bad priests do not the same amount of damage, so all the good ones will not produce an equal amount of good; though good, their holiness and their zeal may not be of the same degree.

Some may object that many are not required for preaching, because one may be heard by hundreds as

well as by a few; but confessions must be heard one by one, therefore if we wish to have the people frequent the Sacraments, there must be many confessors. That is true, but zeal suggests to the really good priest many wise little ways to save time. He reserves the part of teacher to the pulpit and the others for the confessional. Nothing compels him to hear his parish on a Saturday night; confession on any other day will do just as well for the devout members of the flock. If he gives opportunities every morning, there will not be so much of a rush on Saturday night. His zeal will not limit the poor sinners to one chance a week. He teaches his people to say the Confiteor before they enter the confessional, and often he omits the Misereatur and Indulgentiam. In this way he can hear a great many confessions every week; he hears them and hears them well. More confessors may be more useful, but always on the supposition that they are equally good.

The efficacy of the priest's apostolate is not measured by the pulpit and the confessional alone; he has various other means to save souls. His zeal enables him to multiply himself in a way, especially by seeing to it that every Catholic home is provided with Catholic literature. There is besides the efficacy of his example, of his prayers, of his very presence. Would there be such penury of priests, as we lament, if all were able and holy men, and perhaps

better distributed? It is hard indeed, especially for the younger clergy, not to inhale a little of the vitiated moral air, and not to seek preferment and high places rather than the lambs of Christ.

Goodness and number of priests may sometimes perhaps come in collision, but only apparently. The Bishop may find himself or consider himself in the alternative of either admitting some into the sanctuary without the proper qualifications, or of failing to provide adequately for the needs of his diocese. Holy Church offers us also a solution of this case, and desires that it be strictly adhered to. In such a case the Church prescribes that scarcity of the number be preferred to a want of goodness. It is better in the ordination of priests to have a few good ones than many bad ones; so speaks the fourth oecumenical Council of the Lateran. The teaching of St. Thomas is identically the same. After having proved that holiness of life is required of those who receive Holy Orders, he puts to himself the objection that, if such high virtue be required, the necessary number will fail. He answers that the Lord will never allow that, and that in any case it is better to have a few good than many bad. By "bad" he also understands the useless, as is clear from the context. All subsequent theologians have repeated the same teaching. The reason of it is evident. A priest not up to the standard will do a little good, but at the same time he will do much more harm; as we have

seen in the foregoing pages. Let us suppose a large parish with one single good priest unable to attend to all that is necessary, or at least useful; he does a great deal of good, but not all he desires to do. If he had an assistant as good as himself, double the amount of good would be done. Give him one that simply looks upon his work as a trade, instead of helping the parish, you have done it a very bad turn; the assistant in that case will destroy the ministry of the pastor, at least partially. A few objections will further illustrate.

1. To demand great virtue from all ecclesiastics may have been useful and even necessary in other times, but conditions are so different now from the past.

Answer. The Blessed Cardinal Bellarmini had foreseen the objection, and his conclusive answer is: Indeed! times and customs have changed, but the obligation remains. The positive, habitual, and superior goodness of a priest is an unchangeable obligation, as it proceeds from the nature itself of his priesthood, that is, from the sublimity and the difficulty of his duties, which may be summed up in being the light of the world and the salt of the earth. That obligation therefore is a divine, positive, and natural precept, binding without the sanction of the Church and from which the Pope cannot dispense, no more than from the Decalogue. Far from relaxing, the Popes find in the changed conditions and in

the wickedness of the time a reason the more to demand greater sanctity, and better culture than in the past. Pope Leo XIII insists that in order to attain the end, Bishops should look upon their seminaries as the greatest and the best part of their cares.

2. Then a poor priest must be crushed under the weight of his ministry and for want of help die a premature death?

Answer. "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." If one were in cases of real need to prefer reasonably the salvation of souls to his own life, we could think of him that, as the blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians, so also the premature end of a martyr of priestly zeal would be the fruitful germ of new apostolic men. Outside of extraordinary necessity, the exercise of reasonable zeal, guided by obedience, will not shorten the life of the good priest; constant and hard work does not prevent him reaching old age. Enlightened zeal hundredfolds its strength without killing. When we read the lives of St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Alphonsus, etc., we wonder how they could have worked so hard, read so much, and wrote so much, although the days were not longer for them than for us. Ardent and enlightened zeal combined with an abundance of work taught them to be good stewards of time, not to waste it and to make the best possible use of it.

3. Granting that it is preferable to have few good

priests than many indifferent, where shall we find the young men that promise to turn out truly good priests?

Answer. We will find them, provided we earnestly look for them, as we are obliged. We would be greatly to blame for the abandonment of religion, if we have failed to make it known and loved. Let us teach young men especially to love it, and we will find more vocations than we need. The army and the navy do not find easily recruits in the time of peace, but let them give the young men a real soldier's chance on the battlefield, and there is no such difficulty. Let the young men know by your word and example what a truly priestly life is, and there will be more vocations than necessary. We have remarked above that as the Lord has created a profusion of seeds, because many would be lost, so also he has planted the seed of a clerical vocation in many more young men than are necessary because with many, on account of a want of culture and correspondence, it would not sprout. The priests may all rest assured that there are germs in their parishes, but they need their most tender and assiduous care for development.

The undeniable principles, which we have studied so far, teach us that according to the spirit of the Church, the pillar and the ground of truth, we must be far more solicitous about the quality than the number. If we seek the first, we will soon have the

second also. Before a Superior ordains, presents, or recommends a seminarian, he should put to himself the following two questions: 1. Is another good priest necessary, or at least useful in this diocese, according to the prescriptions of the Councils of Chalcedon and of Trent, and the declaration of Benedict XIV? In the United States the answer will certainly be in the affirmative, but let him then ask himself: 2. Have I the moral certainty that this young man will prove to be a truly good priest, an angel of purity for all his life amidst all the dangers of the world, an apostle of zeal solely intent upon procuring the glory of God and the salvation of souls, a man of study and still more of prayer, without a tinge of any modernistic ideas? In case the answer to the second question would be in the negative, the Superior cannot ordain, present, or recommend him without going against the spirit and the ordinances of the Church, and incurring the displeasure of the divine Judge.

Chapter Twelfth

CONFESSORS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

A CONFESSOR can give the best proofs of his zeal in the right direction of ecclesiastics, of candidates or aspirants to the priesthood, and of those who can in any way influence the right formation of the clergy.

a. Let him exert himself to impress upon the priests the love of study and still more of prayer, and often repeat to them that a priest, who is not a man of prayer, cannot be good.

b. Let him clearly explain to the candidates for the priesthood what a good priest is, what degree of virtue is absolutely required, and how that height cannot be reached without the spirit of prayer; let him explain wherein this spirit consists and help them to acquire it. If he has given one the proper attention for a year or so, and notices that he has no such spirit, he may judge him unfit for the priesthood and without a clerical vocation, and oblige him to desist from the attempt to enter the clerical ranks. That is the teaching of Pope Pius X in his "Motu Proprio" of September 1, 1910. If he refuses to

obey, let the confessor refuse absolution. When the confessor sees that the motives impelling the young man to the priestly state are not right, and that he has not a shadow of fitness for that state, he must oblige him to desist. A confessor could not justify his laxity with the thought that for the six years of philosophy and theology, which are still to follow, the Superiors of the seminary will have ample time to try his vocation. Further trial can be good for those only who have merely probable signs of a vocation, not for those who have given no signs at all.

c. For the young men who manifest an intention eventually to become priests, secular or regular, let the confessor not forget the wise words of St. Alphonsus: The confessor should not determine the state of life for a young man to choose, but he must be guided by the signs of his vocation to advise that state, to which he prudently thinks that God calls him. If he wishes to be a religious, let the confessor try to have moral certainty of a call to a certain order or congregation, that he has the right motive and the required qualities for the institution of his choice. If the young man desires to be a secular priest, let the confessor be all the more certain of the motive and of the required qualities of mind and heart, because his obligations are the same, or even greater than those of a religious, as he remains in the midst of the dangers of the world.

d. Vocations come from God, not from parents,

teachers, or confessors. But, as God demands human coöperation for the development of the material seed, so also for the development of an ecclesiastical vocation He demands the coöperation of many; of parents with a good education, of teachers with the right kind of doctrine, of the sacred ministers with careful spiritual culture in the tender years of youth. In many boys the divine seed of an ecclesiastical vocation is sterilized for the want of such helpers, and then we complain of the scarcity of clerical vocations! The great preacher Lacordaire said that whenever he met a boy of twelve years or so, he felt the thought arise in his soul that possibly there was a germ there of a clerical vocation, and that perhaps he might be instrumental in developing it, as he did for so many. There is no occasion to be discouraged even when vocations are scarce. The levitical stem will never wither in Israel, and vocations will never fail in the Church up to the end of time; there will be always generous souls to answer the voice of God, even when it implies privation and sacrifice. Zealous priests will find these privileged souls, and with fatherly care prepare them for the seminary.

e. The confessor will begin by giving them the best possible knowledge of the catechism, and then convey to them what St. Augustine calls the spirit of reflection, the habit of reflecting upon the great truths of faith and apply them to themselves, of ex-

amining and judging their own conscience, that they may be saved in the terrible judgment of God: "If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1 Cor. XI. 31).

The boys are not as slow as is generally believed, but a little ingenuity is needed. For instance, when the confessor knows the predominant defect of a young man, let him advise him to make a good resolution to avoid that defect during the day, and then teach him to examine at night his actions of the day and find out whether he did not fall quite so often. Then give him to read the life of some virtuous young man, a little at a time with a short reflection. After he has taken a delight in good reading give him something more substantial. Finally teach him the simplest form of meditation. Neglect of attention in spiritual directors is often the cause of good vocations being overlooked. Zealous confessors detect tardy vocations, which had not been cultivated, and often prove the safest.

It is well for parish priests occasionally to examine their conscience on this point to ascertain whether they have taken the proper care of those who show aptitude of mind and of heart for the priesthood and fostered their vocation; whether they have tried to preserve in the seminarians during vacation the virtues acquired in the seminary.

With these attentions a zealous confessor will procure many a good priest for the Church; an excellent

and sufficiently numerous clergy would be the reward of combined efforts. In some countries there are said to be fewer vocations than before, but this is inexact; there may be fewer who become priests or religious, but that fact does not prove a decline in vocations; it simply means that there is not the cooperation of those whom God charges with the care of a vocation.

Chapter Thirteenth

WHAT CANDIDATES DOES THE CHURCH WANT PREPARED FOR HOLY ORDERS?

THE answer may be condensed in the following words: As Superiors of clerics have the strictest obligation to conform in a matter of such importance to the spirit and the prescriptions of the Church, they cannot on any account present, recommend, or admit to Holy Orders a cleric in whom after a careful study of his qualities, they have not detected signs of a vocation clear enough to judge with moral certainty that he will be a good minister of the Lord.

The care required to form a true judgment of the candidate's qualities must be all the more earnest: 1. As the importance of the choice is greater; 2. As the discernment of the qualities is more difficult; 3. As a mistake made would be more irreparable.

1. Immense benefits are derived from a true judgment of the success of a cleric, immense evils from a mistake. The right selection is of supreme importance for the spiritual and even for the civil welfare of the world.

2. It cannot be denied that the selection presents great difficulties, except in cases where it is evident at first sight. A Superior uses his best efforts to know the good and bad side of a seminarian, but he may hide his evil qualities and show the good. Father Faber was of the opinion that the sincerity of a young man sometimes leaves much to be desired. A confessor may insist that one not called desist from the attempt, but a Superior must judge of the exterior forum only. A bad priest is as a rule the result of a mistaken prevision; who would have dared present him for ordination, if he had foreseen the result? Can a mistake like that be avoided? We will prove that it can be avoided, with very rare exceptions, but there are two indispensable conditions: *a.* That the Superiors must be well versed in the pedagogico-ecclesiastical questions concerning the necessary qualifications of a cleric for success in the priestly state; *b.* That they must be able to distinguish true qualities from the merely apparent. We all see at a glance what care these conditions demand; good Superiors, however, will very seldom make a mistake.

3. When a mistake is made, can it be easily corrected? St. Alphonsus was of the opinion that the conversion of a bad priest is a sort of a miracle of very rare occurrence. St. John Chrysostom had expressed himself the same way centuries before. A sad experience from those days down to our own confirms

these views. The Apostle instructed his disciple Timothy: "Impose not hands lightly upon any man," (1 Tim. V. 22); he made no exception for the apparently good; he demanded moral certainty of the good qualities. That intimation alone was sufficient to be assured of the obedience of his disciple, more so as in those days there was no danger of any intrusion into the sanctuary. The Holy Ghost dictated that prohibition also for future Bishops, and had it recorded that carelessness in this regard is partaking of other men's sins (*Ib.*); it spells coöperation in all the sacrileges, all the scandals, in all the sad consequences of the future failure of a candidate for ordination. The Church has never changed the above language of the Apostle, and never ceased from impressing all concerned with the great obligation of ascertaining the good qualities of a candidate.

Pope Pius IX, addressing all the Bishops of the world in his first encyclical, said: Take care above all that you do not lightly impose hands, as the Apostle commands, but ordain those only who, after a thorough enquiry, are found equipped with virtue and knowledge, and can be of use and honor in your dioceses. Who knows not the mind of Leo XIII from his splendid encyclicals about the extreme diligence in the selection of the clergy? Pius X probably surpasses all his predecessors, not only by his energy in prescribing supreme diligence, but at the same time in giving a detailed, firm, and concrete

form to put it into practice, especially in his Motu Proprio "Sacrorum Antistitum." The Bishops must have moral certainty before they impose hands on any one.

The moral system now generally accepted is called equiprobabilism, or moderate probabilism, or simply probabilism. It teaches: 1. That after due research of the truth, as long as the opinion favoring freedom against that favoring the law remains solidly probable, it may be followed; 2. That such opinion cannot be followed when there is no mere question of liceity, but of a great good which must necessarily be obtained, or of a great evil which must necessarily be avoided.

Let us apply these principles to our case. The faithful can say: There are many controverted points about the commandments of fasting, of hearing Mass on Sundays and Holidays, of Easter Communion, and the like. We can in good conscience follow a truly probable opinion favoring our liberty; as the law on some points is not certain, it cannot create a certain obligation. No Superior of a seminary can say: It is probable that this candidate will make a good priest, he can therefore be ordained, although it is equally probable that he will not make good. The layman in the above cases, unless there be scandal, cannot do any harm by using his unrestricted liberty, but that is not the case with an ordinandus, who offers only probable hope of goodness;

if he fails to be good, he causes incalculable harm to religion, to souls, and to himself. In this case a Superior cannot be a probabilist; he must be a tutiorist; if he acts otherwise he partakes of other men's sins, and must account to God for all the sad consequences of the failure of a priest.

In the ordination to Deaconship and the Priesthood the Bishop enquires from the Archdeacon, who presents the candidates: Scis illos dignos esse? The answer in the Pontifical is: Inasmuch as human weakness enables me to know, I know and I testify that they are worthy for the burden of this office. Knowledge so far as possible is required; mere probability does not suffice, and justly so. There are two most important commandments to be considered, the one affirmative, and the other negative. The first is to secure for the souls and for the future priests a blessing of measureless importance, that of saving themselves eternally. The other is to prevent souls and the ordinandi themselves from the unspeakable evil of losing themselves eternally. As the Bishops and all those who share their responsibility in the formation of the clergy are obliged to attain the above two important and necessary ends, it is clear that they cannot use doubtful means for that purpose; they must resort to the most efficacious and the safest. Promoting candidates of inferior virtue would be, to say the least, a very doubtful mean. Moral certainty of the goodness required of

the clergy is the only guide in the selection. St. Thomas says: In the Church spiritual things must be preferred to the temporal. One would sin grievously, if knowingly he were to endanger the temporalities of the Church. Therefore those who endanger the spiritual things of the Church commit a greater sin. Those who promote the unworthy certainly expose to danger the spiritual concerns of the Church (Supp. q. XXXVI. art. IV). He calls unworthy those who have not given sufficient proofs of goodness.

The matter under consideration is so important that, if metaphysical or physical certainty were possible, it should be required, but as this is impossible, those concerned should at least endeavor to acquire moral certainty. The Council of Trent, the Roman Catechism, the Roman Pontifical, all confirm the above arguments. Leo XIII and Pius X expressed themselves in the most forcible terms.

Is it possible to have moral certainty in a prevision, which facts often prove to be wrong? Yes; quite possible. The previsions contradicted by the facts were not based upon a full scientific knowledge of the indispensable qualities required of a candidate for the priesthood, and of the full concrete knowledge of each candidate; exceptions confirm the rule; after all the precautions demanded and applied, a mistake will be of very rare occurrence. When we have occasion to admire the edifying and hardwork-

ing life of a true minister of the Lord, a reference to his Superior about his conduct in the seminary will bring the evidence that he was an exemplary seminarian. A seminarian without a vocation may have for a time negative goodness, and the pharisee may not be discovered in time; he is best known to those who resemble him. The Superiors knew it perhaps more or less, but owing to the scarcity of priests in the diocese, they closed their eyes and in doing so overlooked the unchangeable principles of the Church concerning quality and number. At the same time we cannot deny that even a really good seminarian may become unfaithful; he is not confirmed in grace.

Chapter Fourteenth

CLERICAL VOCATION

TO sum up many ideas in one that contains them all, we may state that the moral certainty, the indispensable necessity of which has been proved in the preceding chapters, is based on the certainty of a divine call. The reason is that if any one is called by God, and faithfully corresponds in the seminary, he will ordinarily be a good priest; if he is not so called, or does not correspond with the call, he will be a bad priest. To be convinced we must first form an exact idea of a priestly vocation.

All authors agree that God's call must be the determining factor. The words of Scripture are exceedingly clear: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was." (Hebr. V. 4.) "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." (Jo. XV. 16.) "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." (Jo. XX. 21.) The head of a State chooses his ministers, the master his servants. Intrusion into the sanctuary is, as St. Bernard says, more than temerity; it is folly, sacrilegious usurpation deserving the most terrible punishment.

Although all recognize the need of a vocation, not all agree in determining the essence of it. There are two essential ideas in every call: *a*. There must be a sovereign who chooses, and assigns a certain office to his subject; *b*. There must be a mean — spoken, written, or other — to manifest his will. Without the will of the sovereign there is no calling; without its manifestation, it could not be known and complied with. A priestly vocation must therefore include these two elements and no other. The vocation to the priesthood is the will of God sufficiently known, that this one or that one become his minister. This definition substantially corresponds with the teaching of the Fathers and the Doctors, of the Councils and of the Roman Pontiffs, although all did not use the word — vocation. It is clear that when a young man is asked about his vocation, he will answer the question by declaring that he feels an inclination to the priestly state, in the same way as others will speak of an inclination to music, painting, medicine, architecture, etc. Such inclination or tendency may answer the purpose in human professions, but in an ecclesiastical vocation, which is all divine, there can be nothing else but the will of God and its manifestation. Among the signs of it there is as a rule also inclination.

The holy will of God is simple, eternal, and unchangeable. Theologians and Philosophers argue about the will of God, whether absolute or condi-

tional, whether efficacious or not, whether antecedent or consequent, etc. Whatever view is taken, the above definition remains true. In fact, who will deny that the act whereby God calls such a one for his minister, is an act of His all-providing Will? Who can deny that for this holy Will to be carried out there must be a manifestation of it? With this right idea of an ecclesiastical vocation before us, it is easy to prove that if such call exists, combined with a faithful correspondence of the candidate preparing for the priesthood, his success as a priest is morally certain, and that if either of the elements is missing, failure will be the result.

St. Thomas and all theologians after him teach that, when God calls any one to a particular office, He so prepares and disposes him as to fit him for it. He adapts the principle to the priesthood in the following words of the Apostle: "Our sufficiency is from God, who also hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament." (2 Cor. III. 5.)

An ecclesiastical vocation is then on the part of God a sweet and solid preparation to the priesthood with the help of all sorts of gifts, supernatural and natural, such as: a good disposition inclined to piety, to perfection, to a generous contempt of the transitory things of this world, to zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; after that there will be a chain of powerful help to carry out all priestly duties. The infinite Power, Wisdom, and

Goodness, Who extended the call to such an office, pledges Itself, so to speak, to help efficaciously in the proper discharge of its obligations. The faithful correspondence of the one called in his preparation is magnetized with ever-increasing graces and blessings; his formation produces deep-seated habits, which will not easily be turned from virtuous into vicious. The call of God and the faithful correspondence of the subject, when centered in the priesthood, will make the hardest tasks a source of delight; the zeal of those so called will need to be bridled rather than spurred. Idleness would be a torture; working for souls a pleasure. They are like a pilot who prefers his ship to move on under a favorable wind than keep it motionless in a perfect calm. This pen picture is from St. Alphonsus. A divine call is then a moral certainty of the future success of the ordinandi. Absence of a call implies deficiency of those natural qualities and supernatural graces required to fit one for a state far superior to the common; it means also a want of the actual help, of which the priest is so much and continually in need in the exercise of his sacred duties. The Lord justly denies it to him in punishment for his rash intrusion into the sanctuary, where He did not want him. How can a man without those qualities, graces, and helps be all through life a worthy minister of the altar? The same is true of one who is called but does not correspond. The Lord invites

but does not force; if His invitation is despised, He withdraws the grace of vocation.

The Superiors of a seminary cannot know whether the indifferent behavior of a seminarian indicates absence of vocation or want of correspondence. When the latter is the case, the cleric alone knows the invitations of grace and his own resistance to it. The confessor cannot know entirely, and the superiors *in foro externo* cannot know it sufficiently. From a faithful correspondence we conclude to the vocation, because such coöperation would be impossible unless God's operation had preceded; but ordinarily we cannot conclude from the lukewarmness of a cleric, whether it is the effect of resistance to vocation, or the absence of it. Hence moral certainty in our case must be based upon a divine call, made clear by man's coöperation.

St. Alphonsus calls vocation the main wheel of our whole life; when this is spoiled in a watch, the whole watch is of no further use. When one misses his vocation, says St. Gregory of Nazianza, the whole life will be wrong, because in the state to which God did not call him, he will not have the opportune help for a good life. St. Paul says: " Every one hath his own proper gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that." (1 Cor. VII. 7.) The interpreters of Holy Scripture comment on these words as follows: The Lord gives to every one the graces to discharge well the duties of the state to

which He calls them. Therefore every one is fit if he follows the call; so also any one is unfit for the state to which God does not call him. The feet that are given us to walk are certainly unfit to see; the eye that was given to see cannot hear. How can one be fit to discharge properly the duties of the priesthood, if God did not call him? The Lord chooses the laborers for the vineyard; therefore Christ did not say: Invite men to go and gather the harvest, but "Pray the Master of the harvest that he may send laborers." If God calls one to the dignity of the priesthood, He will also help him, says St. Leo. Christ Himself had said so: "I am the door. By me if any one enter in, he shall be saved; and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures." (Jo. X. 9.) One who is called shall go in and all he undertakes he shall perform without fault and with merit; he will find himself in the midst of occasions and dangers, and with the help of God he will go out safe; he will find pastures; in all his ministerial duties he will be assisted by special graces to advance spiritually, because he is in the pasture where the Lord called him.

A man to be raised to the height of the priesthood, says St. Thomas, must be raised by the divine power and be placed above the natural order of things, because he is made the sanctifier of the people and a vicar of Christ. One that is not called may apply to himself the words of the Wise Man: "There is that

hath appeared a fool after he was lifted up on high." (Prov. XXX. 32.) Had he remained in the world he might have made a good layman, but as a priest he is a failure and will do more harm than good to the Church.

We may dispense ourselves from refuting the objection — If only those should be ordained who have all the signs of a vocation, there would not be priests enough to supply the needs of the people. It has been answered more than once in the preceding chapters. Why have the Roman Pontiffs been so solicitous about ascertaining the vocation of candidates for the priesthood, if not because their success or failure in the sacerdotal state depends upon a call of God, or its absence?

Chapter Fifteenth

SIGNS OF A VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

THIS is the question of practical importance. How shall we know with the required degree of certainty that God in His loving Providence had predestined, prepared and disposed some to the height of the priesthood, to whom He will give most special help all through life that they may be holy priests, truly zealous for His glory and for the salvation of souls? By what true and certain signs can we ascertain a vocation to the priesthood?

Although all authors agree on a divine vocation, some enumerate more signs than others, but practically all are of the same opinion. We give the conclusions of a few. Bishop Malou, the great apologist of the Immaculate Conception, and defender of Catholic truth, enumerates nine signs; seven interior or personal, and two exterior: 1. Purity of intention, 2. A well defined attraction for the state, 3. A great innocence of life combined with perfect purity of heart, either preserved or completely and solidly restored, 4. A sincere love of Jesus Christ, 5. Intense zeal for the salvation of souls, 6. A great esteem for the sacerdotal ministry and an ardent desire to follow its obligations, 7. A sincere and lively love of

priestly perfection, with an assiduous aspiring to the most sublime virtue, 8. The wish of the people and the needs of the Church, 9. The judgment of lawful Superiors.

The Ven. Olier, founder of the Sulpicians, in his treatise on Sacred Orders gives these four: 1. Great purity and holiness of life, 2. Contempt and disgust of the world, 3. Inclination to that state, not impetuous and changeable, but sweet and constant, 4. Aptitude and disposition to fulfil properly all the functions of that state.

St. Alphonsus gives only three chief signs: 1. Sufficient knowledge, 2. Positive, habitual, and progressive goodness, 3. The right intention or the desire to work for and to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The Sulpicians and most of the French authors reduce the three of St. Alphonsus to the following two: 1. Intellectual and moral ability, 2. Inclination to the sacred ministry. The reader may find in these authors the explanation and development of these signs.

The above signs only concern ordinary vocations. It would be useless to treat of extraordinary signs, such as changed Paul from a persecutor into an apostle, called Sts. Nicholas of Myra and Ambrose of Milan to a state, to which they never had given a thought, or overcame the humble abhorrence of a John Chrysostom or a Gregory the Great.

Of the ordinary signs some belong to the subject: fitness resulting from sufficient knowledge, excelling goodness, and right intention; other signs are found in the needs or at least the useful field of a diocese, unless the aspirant be disposed to join another needy diocese, or the foreign missions. Finally there must be the Bishop's will to promote the candidate, whether he invites him or accepts his request for admission. Of these three groups of signs each is necessary but none is sufficient by itself; when united they form the complete manifestation of the divine will, in which after all consists the vocation. The will of God must be manifested to the subject, to his director, and to his Bishop. To the subject it is manifested, not so much through dispassionate examination of his tendencies and of his strength, but rather through the assurance of an able spiritual director, to whom he has revealed his heart, the past and the present of his life, and to the free approval and calling of the Bishop. To the director, who can for obvious reasons make his judgment known to the subject only, the will of God is manifested by applying to the subject the true pedagogico-ecclesiastical criteria concerning the will of God after a long and careful study of his character, his virtues, his defects, his generosity in overcoming them, his diligence in using the suggested means, and the favorable results of his fight. To the Bishop it is manifested by means of his entire conviction,

obtained under the necessary precautions, that the subject is really fit for the high and difficult station of the priesthood, and that adding him to the ranks of his clergy is something, if not necessary, at least certainly useful.

We might be surprised that so many authors, and among them St. Alphonsus, only treat of the constituents of fitness, and do not even mention the need or the benefit of the diocese or the will of the Bishop. It is because these two signs are understood, and also because they treated of seminarians who had already been accepted conditionally by the Bishop. Hence the whole question for a seminarian resolves itself practically in ascertaining his fitness, that is, whether he has the knowledge, the degree of virtue, and the right intention, which in reality fit him for that sublime state. Yet we must observe that although this fitness be the most necessary condition for success, it does not give any right to ordination. The aspirant could not present himself to his Bishop and tell him: I am undoubtedly fit, and therefore called to the priesthood; my director assures me of it, therefore I claim the right to be ordained. No; a vocation to the priesthood is nothing inherent to the soul, as is the sacerdotal character, giving a right to perform the sacred functions, or as sanctifying grace, giving a right to glory. Vocation is simply the will of God, who chooses, prepares, and by means of the above signs invites one to the priesthood. God

has charged the Bishops to pass judgment about the fitness of the subjects, and the interests of the diocese. If they do not faithfully discharge their duty, they are responsible only to God and to the Sovereign Pontiff, if he demands an accounting, but to no one else. Fitness is a sign of a divine vocation, because it is an effect of it, every visible effect points to an unseen cause; but it is only an ideal sign; the only genuine sign, although not infallible, for the government of the Church is the will of those whom God has commissioned to be the interpreters and the executors of His will.

We should not forget, however, that among the constituents of fitness, holiness of life takes first place. A holy seminarian will have the right intention, that is, the desire to do his best for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Holiness is ardent love of God which, as St. Thomas observes, necessarily produces zeal. Zeal leads him irresistibly and continually to acquire, keep, and increase the knowledge necessary to his zeal. Hence during his whole life he will be a man of prayer and of study. Therefore the sign, that is the foundation of all other signs, is undoubtedly holiness of life. For that reason many of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church do not mention any other sign, but it must be true holiness and in a high degree. It does not consist in many pious practices, nor in singularities, affectations, vain desires, and beautiful projects, but in the

love of God and the hatred of oneself. The Gospel imposes these obligations on every follower of Christ, but there are very many degrees — from the love which hardly suffices to avoid hell to the love that transforms man into a Seraph. A priest's love, to enable him to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, must be far above the common love of even good Christians, and approach nearer to the heroic than to the common; without it, angelic purity and tireless zeal would be impossible. If a priest must possess superior holiness, then a seminarian must possess it before ordination, because ordination does not give it, but rather tends to decrease it on account of the cessation of many gains and of emerging loss.

It is not difficult to know whether the love of God and the hatred of oneself have reached the point where it will produce in a young man perfect purity and true zeal. His speech and his general behavior, especially outside of the seminary, will make him known. Observe his taste for the Sacraments, and for the word of God in sermons, reading, and meditation, the sources that give his soul light and warmth. Jesus Christ in Holy Communion is the flame which lights, heats, and destroys all stains on the soul. The word of God heard or read enlightens; when meditated upon it inflames. The Sacraments and the word of God reveal His greatness and goodness, and cause man to love Him with all his

heart and to have Him loved by all. They enable man to realize his own nothingness and wickedness with a holy hatred of self; they show up the vanity of the transitory pleasures, honors, and riches of the world, and produce detachment of all things earthly. Observe the seminarian frequenting the Sacraments, and earnestly spending the time allotted in spiritual reading, chiefly the lives of the saints, actual illustrations of the word of God! how he finds time for such reading without failing in any of his other duties! The good seminarian uses the means which must make of him a good priest. Such seminarians, even if few in number, when they are priests will cultivate with great zeal the minds of the boys, and cause the germ of a divine vocation to develop in many of those who come under their charge, and eventually provide the diocese with a sufficient number of good priests.

Chapter Sixteenth

SIGNS OF NON-VOCATION

MANY authors after dealing with the signs of vocation, treat of the signs of non-vocation. At first sight this might appear as superfluous, because the signs of non-vocation are simply the absence of the signs of vocation. If sufficient science is a sign of vocation, and if science cannot be acquired without the natural talent and love of study, it is clear that any one not having the talent and without a serious and constant love of study, is not called to the priesthood. If one has not in view the glory of God and the salvation of souls, he must choose another career.

It cannot, however, be denied that treating of the signs of non-vocation helps greatly to a lucid knowledge of the true signs of vocation, and to bring out the very important truth that no call to the priesthood can be supposed to exist in any one void of the best dispositions under every respect. The writers on the subject agree that the hope of overcoming serious defects of a natural disposition by education has generally resulted in a vain illusion, a source of bitter regrets, and of the saddest consequences.

We say generally, because there are some rare instances when almost superhuman efforts conquered nature, as was the case with St. Francis de Sales, fighting, for twenty-two years, his hasty temper, until he finally became the meekest of men. An overestimate of future grace and effort would be a great mistake in passing judgment on a vocation.

When, as St. Thomas teaches, God calls one to an office, He also prepares and disposes him that he may be fit to take proper care of it; hence follows that defects in an aspirant preventing him from properly discharging the duties of the priesthood, clearly indicate non-vocation. Bishop Malou distinguishes the signs of non-vocation into interior and exterior signs. He subdivides the interior signs into vices or defects of the mind, of the heart and of the body. He calls defects of the mind: 1. Ignorance or rather intellectual inability; 2. Feigned piety combined with singularity. Woe to all concerned, if the judges of a vocation allow themselves to be deceived by superficial piety and exterior practices only! The candidate for the priesthood must possess solid, high, and ever-progressing piety, otherwise amid danger, as a writer observes, the angel will fall and the brute will remain; 3. Very strong inclination to scruples; 4. Hypocrisy and deceitfulness; 5. Pride domineering the mind. Humility is the foundation of all virtues; it will make the priest invulnerable against all the fiery darts of the enemy; it will make

of him a lamb conquering the wolves; it will preserve him from the errors so common in our days by dutiful submission to the Holy See. A priest is not a fruit-bearing branch of the vine, unless through the visible Rulers of the Church he is united with Jesus Christ. A proud priest, full of himself, is a severe censor of every one and everything, a true scourge for the people and for his Bishop, and if he has more than ordinary intelligence he may be for the whole Church. Hence experienced educators of clerics tell us that want of humility and want of purity are the two surest signs of non-vocation.

Bishop Malou gives as vices of the heart: 1. Sensuality; 2. Avarice; 3. Laziness and indolence; 4. Inconstancy; 5. Intention to become a priest for temporal motives.

The vices or defects of the body are: 1. Considerable deformity; 2. Sickness or mutilation that make the performance of the sacred functions physically or morally impossible; 3. Periodical attacks that create fear or disgust.

Bishop Malou gives as exterior signs of non-vocation: 1. The natural obligation of supporting parents, so long as there is real need of it; 2. Canonical irregularities; 3. Advised and constant opposition of the Superiors.

Many other authors have contributed beautiful pages on the subject. They all agree that the Superiors must close the gates of the sanctuary to all

who do not give sufficient and indispensable proof of the right intention. Before becoming the model of the flock, the light of the world, and the salt of the earth, the candidate must be blameless, prudent, just, holy, more so in the present state of society than ever before. The Superiors must be firm and dismiss the non-called in time without being moved by any earthly consideration, nor influenced by pity in the vain hope that a little more time, greater efforts of the candidate, greater diligence on the part of the Directors, will free him from the defects of a bad disposition. No one denies the possibility of such emancipation, but no one admits its real probability. All come to the following conclusion: The correction of nature and of its tendencies, the perfect freedom from vices inherited or contracted, the right and constant practice of the opposed virtues, are moral phenomena, in which prudence takes much stock for the selection of a state of life; superhuman efforts are required to effect a change. St. Augustine knew it by experience, and therefore he writes that such transformation is a miracle rather than an example. Yet, this transformation, not merely improvement, should be verified in a seminarian of vicious dispositions to qualify him for the ecclesiastical state.

Sagacity on the part of the Superiors should accompany firmness. Bad inclinations may proceed not only from predispositions, but also from bad

habits acquired through scandal or the want of a good education or other causes. There is a wide difference between evil inclinations produced by nature, such as: temperament, heredity, etc., and those produced by bad habits. These are easier to overcome than the other, at least so long as they have not become a second nature. A young man, especially in regard to the impure vice, should be treated with supreme prudence and delicacy, with tireless efforts, and with almost motherly affection, but cautiously, that like the rays of the sun we may enlighten and disinfect the mire, without entangling in it. If necessary, hygienic, prophylactic, and medicinal means should be resorted to; the efforts of a good Catholic physician should be combined with those of a prudent director.

The sagacity of the Superiors should detect whether the evil inclinations of a seminarian belong to the first or to the second kind. How shall they proceed? After having gathered as exact an information as possible of his physical constitution, temperament, and predominant tendencies, and those of his parents, they must try to acquire a perfect knowledge of his behavior. Next they should point out to him the necessity, the wonderful efficacy, and the right use of the three great means which God has granted us for the purpose of conquering ourselves: the word of God, prayer, and the Sacraments. Then they should watch the result of their efforts,

whether he shows willingness, diligence, and constancy in using the means, and above all whether there is any improvement. If the improvement is remarkable and steady, there is well-founded hope that complete emancipation will soon follow. If on the other hand he is slow, negligent, and inconstant in using the means of sanctification, and therefore changes but little or not at all his accustomed behavior, they must conclude that the wicked inclinations find their source in the vehemence of passion or the weakness of the will to free himself, or in both. This constitutes his evil disposition.

Experience in the direction of souls shows that many of the faithful, with a strong inclination to evil, lead a good Christian and even a pious life; they feel a horror for sin; they violently resist the assaults of their passions, and are firm and accurate in the use of the means. If they fall, it is after a strenuous fight; after a fall they grieve and try to rise at once, and to guard themselves better for the future. There are others without that strong inclination to evil, who abandon themselves to disorder, because they have no horror for it, do not resist energetically, nor strengthen themselves with the proper means; they fall easily and feel no regret; they do not guard sufficiently against future falls.

In the final analysis we may say that the three great means — word of God, prayer and Sacraments — are the touchstone to distinguish good from bad

dispositions. The one who knows them and uses them with earnestness and constancy has the right disposition; the one who neglects them or very remittently uses them has the wrong disposition; the first is a sick man who desires to be cured, the other has no serious will to be restored to health.

The wise use of that touchstone to know the dispositions of each seminarian or aspirant to the priesthood in order to judge of a vocation is a most delicate and difficult task, to be entrusted to capable hands only. It is one of the most sacred duties of Ordinaries to watch that the three great means of priestly sanctification — the word of God, heard or read, prayer, mental and vocal, and the Sacraments — are furnished to the seminarians in the best manner possible. With the above knowledge of a seminarian, supported by the other criteria of ecclesiastical pedagogy, and having in mind the holiness of a priest, as required by St. Paul, and the sovereign Pontiffs, the Superiors will know how to pass judgment of vocation or non-vocation in every aspirant.

Chapter Seventeenth

WHOM DOES THE CHURCH WISH ADMITTED TO HOLY ORDERS?

IN the preceding chapters we have seen what kind of priests Holy Church requires. We will now inquire what kind and how many she desires promoted to Holy Orders. The Church refuses entrance into the sanctuary to all those who are not called, and also to all those of whose vocation she is not morally certain.

Should all those for whom there is no reasonable doubt of a vocation be promoted to Holy Orders? It might at first appear that even this number should be reduced for the following reasons: 1. The Councils of Chalcedon and of Trent insist that the Bishop should only ordain as many as are necessary or at least useful to his diocese; 2. According to Benedict XIV that limit is reached when all the positions in the diocese are filled; 3. St. Francis de Sales says that the Church does not need many priests, but good priests.

Whatever we might think of the question in abstract possibilities, it is in practice never to be presumed, at present less than ever, that the Church

would refuse admission to a young man with all the interior signs of a vocation — sufficient knowledge, more than ordinary holiness, and the right intention to consecrate all his life to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. There are two conclusive arguments in support of that view. The first is the vast field of sacerdotal activity, and the limited number of fit laborers to work it. The second is that a genuine priestly vocation is an act of Divine Providence.

The mission of the priest is immense and conterminous with the world. It embraces all the children of Adam without distinction of place, language, nationality, culture; all are entitled to be helped by him to attain the end for which God created them. The priest is sent to preach the Gospel, that is, all the truths to be believed, all the commandments to be kept, the Sacraments to be received, the counsels to be followed by those to whom it is given. Moreover he is to preach or explain the motives of credibility, the beauty, the holiness, the incomparable advantages of that heavenly doctrine. He must be prepared to refute all errors to the contrary. He must keep it all in mind for constant use, whether for the multitude or for a single individual; he must exert himself for every single soul, because for it Christ became man, shed His blood, and died. The Sacraments are administered to the individual; all realize what time and diligence the right adminis-

tration of the Sacrament of Penance requires, and how much depends upon it.

The priest, the man of God by excellence, the model of the flock, must furthermore accompany his teaching with good example. His teaching includes the works of charity, mercy, and benevolence; it embraces these same virtues when applied to the temporal needs of his brethren; the priest must, as far as possible, come to the relief of all misery. Massillon addresses the following words to the idle priest: "So long as there shall be sinners to convert, ignorant to teach, weak to support, unhappy to console, oppressed to defend, impious and unbelievers to confound, how can a priest find time to waste in the vanities and frivolities of the world?" Another experienced writer, Frassinetti, said: "A glance around us reveals an amount of work to be done that stuns the imagination, we see at once that all a priest can do for the glory of God and the salvation of souls is as a mere nothing compared with what were desirable a priest could do."

If then we consider the multitude of human beings to whom the priest is sent; if we further consider the many duties he is sent to discharge for their welfare, we realize the vastness of the field, and the inadequate number of laborers to reap the harvest. And yet there are comparatively but few fit subjects, to whom that sublime mission can be entrusted. It presupposes detachment of the things of earth, and

such ardent love of God as to sacrifice by a perpetual vow the pleasures of the flesh and many other worldly attractions, in order to devote oneself entirely to the interests of souls and of God. There have been and there shall be but comparatively few of that generous stamp. For many, even among Christians, this world is practically all, and the blessings of the other world are but a dream; limited is the number of those for whom the temporal is nothing and the eternal is all. God chooses His ministers among these generous people, because they only are fit to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

The great difficulty for that fitness comes from the most wise command of perfect and perpetual continency, of Apostolic institution. The Fathers consider the perfect keeping of that commandment so difficult as to compare the keepers with angels and martyrs.

If then the priestly mission, on the one hand, covers an unlimited field, and, on the other, the number of fit laborers is small, how can we imagine that the Church, desiring the salvation of all, would refuse access to the sanctuary to any one that is fit? In our days, especially, when we must oppose a causeway to the growing torrent of unbelief, perversion of ideas, and corruption of morals? How many good works to encourage for the religious education of youth? With what assiduity we need now preach

the word of God, in season and out of season, in the church and in the homes, to the public and to the individual? How should not we promote the frequent reception of the Sacraments among all classes of people? Where are the priests necessary to do so? And this without speaking of the millions who still sit in the darkness and in the shadow of death. As therefore it is a mistake to promote the unfit or the doubtfully called to the priesthood, so it would be damnable to go to the other extreme for fear of unduly increasing the number of sacred ministers by promoting those who are certainly qualified. The mind of the Church is that the gates of the sanctuary should be inexorably closed to those about whose vocation there is no moral certainty, and thrown wide open to all and every one who has the marks of fitness for the priestly duties. The definition of an ecclesiastical vocation, as given by Canon Stapf, namely, the will of God sufficiently known that so and so become His minister, is the simplest, the most comprehensive, and the truest. It equally evades the exaggeration of those who claim that a vocation is exclusively the work of God in such a manner that the Bishop simply acts as verifier and executor, and of others who claim that it belongs entirely to the Bishop and that God only enters as ratifier.

Vocation is an act of Divine Providence, disposing and inviting one to dedicate himself to the ecclesi-

astical ministry. It is an act of Providence, not only in so far as the remote dispositions exist in a candidate, but also in effecting that with His help the remote become near dispositions. The contributing help to a good character, sufficient intelligence, and other qualities required are: a good education at home and in school, a wise confessor, edifying companions, spiritual books, bitter remorse after a fall, a vivid enlightenment of the mind, etc., until they enkindle in him the desire of spending his life in saving souls from hell and leading them to heaven.

This continued work of Providence shows sufficiently that the fortunate young man is called to the priesthood; we cannot suppose that the Church would resist the divine will. The Church continues the mission which Christ received from His Father; she can never be unfaithful to her trust. It is true that to know fully and beyond doubt that God wishes such a one for His minister, two other external signs are required besides fitness: 1. That his ordination be opportune for the diocese, or at least for the Church in general; 2. That the Bishop, taking into account fitness and opportuneness, choose him or, as the Roman Catechism expresses it, call him to the priesthood. These two conditions never fail. The harvest is great and the laborers are few. No more glorious work on earth, says St. Vincent de Paul, than to procure a good priest for the Church. The Bishop is the chief steward of the evangelical field;

he sees better than others the plentifulness of the harvest and the scarcity of laborers; he might be tempted to admit one less fit rather than refuse one who is evidently qualified.

St. Alphonsus and innumerable other authors, when treating of the signs of vocation, give these three only: sufficient knowledge, high degree of virtue, and the right intention, without mentioning the external signs, because they are understood and never fail; in fitness all is included. How? Because it is the work, not of man, but of Divine Providence with the coöperation of men, chiefly of the subject. "God hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament" (2 Cor. III. 6). Providence arranges all with infinite wisdom.

One of the most admirable parts of this all-wise Providence are the proportion, the correspondence, and the agreement between the ends and the means. Hence the well-known principle of the Angelic Doctor that when God chooses one for an office, He prepares and disposes that he may be fit. In our case God has completed the work of preparation to the priesthood after many years of patient fatherly care; that alone is sufficient indication that He wants him raised to that sublime office. Otherwise we would be obliged to admit that God does things uselessly, which is blasphemy, and that He led astray the candidate and the judge of His calling. The Lord knows the needs of His Mystic Vine; He does

not send Angels to choose His laborers; He does not use miraculous means, yet He makes His merciful designs sufficiently known. The voice of a Divine call can easily be heard with the knowledge of the signs explained above.

In a very rare case God does not wish, in the ecclesiastical or in the religious state, an individual, his perfect fitness notwithstanding, whether He is pleased with the efforts of the subject to correspond faithfully to the invitation of grace, or for other most holy purposes. In that case, however, God places insurmountable obstacles in the way, or in other extraordinary manners clearly manifests the absence of His will. Such very rare exceptions confirm the general rule.

It happens more frequently that the will of God is there, but has so far not been sufficiently manifested, although the one called has long passed the age for a classical training. In a young man of thirty, for example, there is not the first constituent of fitness; he has not the knowledge; there is not the third constituent — the right intention — because he never thought of becoming a priest, but there may be the second and principal constituent — holiness of life, so high indeed that his only desire is to serve and love God. Then Providence steps in and inspires the Bishop, a good priest, or even a pious layman, to suggest to him the idea of becoming a priest. He at first smiles at the suggestion as

something impossible. He is told that his want of knowledge need not discourage him, as it did not discourage St. Ignatius of Loyola and many others. A good Bishop, and perhaps a pious layman, finds a way. The young man is enchanted at the sublime prospect; guided by a good director he puts his hand to the plough, and although he may not become a man of great learning, he may be a very useful priest to souls. This is a tardy vocation, but all the safer as no unworthy motives enter into it; the subject perhaps understands better the duties for which he is preparing, and which he will never shirk.

Means, times, and manners may differ, by which God provides that one acquire sufficient science, high virtue, and right intention, but these three constituents of fitness constitute, not a mere hope or probability, but a positive and evident fact indicating in an unquestionable way the will of God, and consequently the will of the Church. If desirous therefore of the world's welfare we should try to coöperate with Providence, whenever we discover a boy of good character and of a sufficiently bright mind, because possibly God has called him to the priesthood. Let us give him the lives of holy ecclesiastics to read, recommend a zealous confessor to him, preserve him from bad companions, if possible. If we notice that with these and other helps he remains good and pious for two or three years after the critical age, let us cautiously try to devise some means

whereby he be placed on the road to the priesthood, and be prepared to make some sacrifice for the purpose, if necessary. We may rest assured that, if the young man, faithful to the inspiration of grace, with our help, becomes a good priest, we have done a work most pleasing to the sweet Hearts of Jesus and Mary in conformity with the wishes of the Church; we have rendered thereby a great service to our neighbors, and acquired for ourselves an endless treasure of merits. The good priests can never be too many; their number will always be too limited.

Chapter Eighteenth

SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

THE Church desires all worthy candidates raised to the priesthood. In the preceding chapter we have had occasion to explain the Church's mind in connection with the injunction of the Councils of Chalcedon and of Trent that the Bishops shall ordain those only, who are actually necessary or useful to their respective dioceses. The injunction of the Council of Chalcedon, indirectly confirmed by that of Trent, was most reasonable, because no administration appoints more employees than it needs for its purpose. The injunction, however, of these Councils in no way contradicts what we have endeavored to prove in the preceding chapters: 1. Because they treat of aspirants to the priesthood in general, whereas we have treated of those who possess the morally certain signs of a vocation; 2. Because they had in view the needs or the utility of particular dioceses, whereas we take into consideration the needs and the utility of the universal Church, of the sheep within and without the fold.

The Bishop certainly cannot found his judgment solely on the number of priests in his diocese, but on

the qualities of the aspirant in conjunction with the moral needs of his diocese. The Fathers of these Councils knew that a diocese may abound in priests, and yet be in need of good priests; unfortunately this was in those days the case in many places. They knew therefore that to judge of the need or the utility of a new priest for the diocese, it is not enough to consider whether there are sufficient priests for the exercise of public worship and the administration of the Sacraments; the paramount consideration is whether such administration and exercise are performed in the proper way to attain the two-fold end — the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

There is a wide difference between need and utility. For real need to exist there must be want of priests, but for utility it is enough that somewhere in the diocese some good or some more good can be done. Where is the Bishop who can ever truthfully say: I have so many zealous priests that it would be useless to add any more? If then utility to a diocese is according to the Council of Trent a sufficient motive for the ordination of a new priest, it is undeniable that any good priest, called by God, will be most useful to a diocese.

The two Councils on the point under consideration did not take into consideration the needs or the utility of the universal Church, whose mission is to preach the Gospel to every creature, believer and in-

fidel. In the strange supposition that a Bishop judge a new good priest not even useful to his diocese, as a member of the governing body of the Church he should advise him to join a needy diocese or a Foreign Missions Society.

Benedict XIV explained the mind of the two Councils in his declaration how a Bishop can judge of the needs of his diocese. To understand the great Pontiff rightly we must consider the context of the precautionary measures, which he desires the Bishops to adopt. He warns them to be cautious and prudent in ordaining; He rebukes them for the wrong ease and laxity in the words of the Blessed Bellarmini, who had followed St. Jerome, St. Bernard and others. The Pope foresaw two evils from this laxity: the lessening of respect on the part of the laity and the intrusion of the unworthy. Quite reasonably, therefore, he insisted that the Bishop should ordain only those whom he considers useful. If his intention had been to enjoin the Bishops to ordain a sufficient number only to fill the vacant places, he would have acted against the mind of the Council of Trent, because it insisted that the pastors should have sufficient helpers for divine worship and the administration of the Sacraments. (Sess. XXI. cap. IV.) Where would the pastors find helpers, if all are occupied? Pope Benedict aimed, as he repeatedly expresses it, at two things: 1. That a superfluous and useless number of priests should be

avoided, and 2. That only those aspirants who give clear signs of a divine vocation should be ordained. These are always useful and too few in number. The great Pope, to uproot the evils of his day — the excessive number and the intrusion of the unworthy — suggests the practical means to obviate the sad consequences of too lightly imposing hands. All these means suggested are of their nature directive in the choice of those who are called, and in discarding the others, and so indirectly reduce the excessive number. Some of these means are of universal application now, such as: a long residence in the seminary. Pope Benedict XIV prescribed to Bishops vigilance concerning the life and the behavior of the aspirants, a rigorous examination of their science, not for the form only, a retreat before ordination, observance of the interstices that the divine call may be better ascertained, moral certainty of habitual chastity. These means will produce worthy priests and eliminate the intruders. Therefore neither the Councils of Chalcedon and of Trent, nor the declaration of Benedict XIV contradict our conclusion that the Church now less than ever would exclude from the sanctuary those who give unmistakable proofs of a divine vocation.

What about the saying of St. Francis de Sales that the Church needs not many, but good priests? It would indeed be hard to understand that expression of St. Francis without considering the epoch in

which he lived. The ignorance and the corruption of a great part of an overnumerous clergy, and the concomitant corruption of the people, furnished to Martin Luther the pretext to howl for the need of a reformation, at a time when he could very easily propagate his doctrine destructive of dogma and morality. God watched over the preservation of His Church; He inspired, directed, and ended the holy Council of Trent, which opposed a true to a false reformation; it revived faith and promoted good morals. God raised in various countries most learned and holy men, who, with the splendor of their virtues and the depth of their learning, safeguarded the salutary effects of the Council. They, while thanking God for having inspired to the Council to begin a universal reformation, especially of the clergy, lamented at the same time that not all had carried into effect the wise prescriptions and canons of the Council after the example of St. Charles, Blessed Barbarigo, and many other holy Bishops. It is hard indeed to uproot inveterate customs.

Among the many brilliant champions of the good cause was Blessed Bellarmini the strenuous opponent of Protestantism. No wonder that at that time, at the sight of that multitude of ignorant priests, leading lives unbecoming a good priest, the most zealous Doctor of the Church, St. Francis de Sales, should reëcho the words of his illustrious contemporary, and cry out: The Church does not need

many but good priests. It was the general lament of all good Bishops and good priests who even then did not fail and never will fail in the Church of God. St. Thomas, some centuries before, expressed the same views as St. Francis: If as many ministers cannot be found as there are at present, it is preferable to have a few good than many bad, as said Blessed Clement in his second letter to James, the brother of the Lord. The teaching of the Church throughout the ages has been consistently the same concerning the admission of worthy ministers only. Good workers in the vineyard of the Lord are not so born, says Benedict XIV, but must be formed.

Supposing that the Lord in His inscrutable designs does not bless our efforts in developing vocations, we should prefer a scarcity of good priests, even to the extent that all parishes cannot have a pastor, rather than that plenty be restored with those who are not certainly called, as Pius X wrote to the Bishops of Venezuela. That holy Pope expressed himself in the same way as St. Francis de Sales; their words give us the rule to follow when goodness and number collide. When we cannot have all that is desirable of good things we select the best, and of evils we choose the least. In the words of St. Francis there is no comparison between a few good priests and many good priests, but there is between a few good and many bad. The scarcity of good priests is an evil, because it deprives so

many of the helps of religion, but it is a far greater evil to increase the supply with unworthy subjects, because these do greater harm; they ruin souls and discredit religion. The sheep are better off without a shepherd than with a wolf to guard them.

St. Alphonsus says of St. Francis de Sales that he ordained but few priests, like all good Bishops do, because there are not many candidates with a true vocation. Not that good Bishops would not prefer to ordain many, but in the dilemma, few or unworthy, they invariably place quality before number. They anxiously desire to feed the flocks entrusted to them so that none of them be lost. They see the need of helpers and do all in their power to procure them, but if there be any fear that a candidate be a wolf rather than a shepherd, they unmovably refuse his promotion. After Pius X had said few but good, he added immediately: What is the use of the doubtful and unworthy ones?

There is no doubt that all, including the Council of Trent, Benedict XIV, and St. Francis de Sales, agree that entrance into the sanctuary should not be forbidden to one truly called.

It is indeed a serious loss to deprive the Church of one good priest, but giving her a bad one is a worse loss, in the same way as it is a less evil for a flock to be without a shepherd than to have a wolf over them. It seems incredible that in a matter of such importance some allow themselves to fall into

an error of judgment concerning vocation. In cases of clerical apostacy and scandalous conduct, the laity who know ask themselves: How could Superiors accept such a one? What could be expected of him?

Some writers attribute the mistake to the extraordinary efforts of the evil one, leading Superiors to this unwarranted and fatal kindness. The devil has various ways of presenting this terrible temptation. Between Superiors and students there is the relation of father and son, and we know that affection often blinds reason. The son tries to hide his bad qualities and to make a parade of the good ones; the Superior in his heart is inclined to excuse the first and exaggerate the other. The Superior will take pity on him: Poor boy, he has never caused me much displeasure, he has never failed much in his duties, the diocese is in need of priests, there are parishes without a pastor, his family have made such sacrifices for him, his pastor has recommended him. How can I now dismiss him after so many years of college and seminary training? He is not of the brightest, he has some little defects, he may not be a fervent priest, but he will not be a bad one; dismissal would ruin him. Thus the devil deceives many Superiors, because they do not sufficiently reflect on the following points: *a.* That negative goodness is not sufficient; priestly goodness must be above the ordinary. *b.* That non-corrected defects in seminarians become

serious vices in priests. *c.* That no need of the diocese can dispense of the essential goodness of a true minister of Jesus Christ; the Church needs builders, not destroyers. *d.* That it is in the opinion of St. Thomas a mortal sin to ordain one, of whose more than ordinary virtue there is no moral certainty. *e.* That good results can be expected only from a true vocation. *f.* That there is no middle way between a priest adorned with perfect chastity and true zeal and a bad one. *g.* That dismissal of one who shows no signs of a vocation must be resorted to at any time, even on the eve of ordination to the priesthood, but preferably many years before, in order that a non-called aspirant may choose and qualify for another career, and remain an exemplary layman.

Regular meetings, annual or more frequent, of seminary Presidents or Superiors should clear all doubts in ecclesiastical pedagogy. In Pastoral Theology the following points should be insisted upon: true concept of the priesthood, indispensable degree of virtue in all aspirants, signs of a divine vocation.

Chapter Nineteenth

WHAT YOUNG MEN SHOULD BE ADMITTED TO THE SEMINARY?

THE Council of Trent prescribed that only such shall be admitted to the seminary, whose character and will furnish hope that they serve in the ecclesiastical ministry all through life. But as this blessed hope is the last to die and the first to be born, Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical of December 8, 1892 added to hope the qualificative of "well-founded," in order to have us understand that this hope is not synonymous with a simple probability, but a reasonable hope, a truly probable hope. What should the foundation of that hope be? The Council has answered the question. The character or disposition should not only be good but excellent. Disposition is not exactly the will, but the will generally follows the disposition. As the priest should have excellent virtue, so the young man should have an excellent disposition. There are various degrees in the spiritual life of young men: middling, good, very good. Even to be a moderately good Christian a good disposition is required; it must be very good in the case of an aspirant to the priesthood. It is only such high devotion, says St. Francis de Sales, that can spur on to the life of the evangelical coun-

sels, the most difficult of which is that of perfect chastity, which every priest must practise all through life. Therefore, a pious, generous disposition, which would make one a good paterfamilias is not sufficient to make a good priest, a true minister of the Lord.

Another foundation on which reasonable hope can be built, is the will of the aspirant. It should not be a sort of childish velleity, but a serious and constant will, preceded by a long consideration of the importance and the hardships connected with the state which he desires to embrace. If he had to find it out afterwards for himself, courage may fail to recede from the road to the sanctuary. Experience shows that the young men who have entered the seminary without sufficient reflection, often lack the courage to turn back, when they realize that they are not called, under the impression that it is too late to embrace another career.

The Superiors, deliberating upon the admission of a candidate to the seminary, should never lose sight of the fact that admitting him means sending him on the way to the priesthood, which is a state properly divine, a state in which one should be so good as to command the respect of even the wicked. The gift of miracles was granted to the first ministers of the Gospel to enable them to conquer the minds; for us, so to speak, it is necessary to present the continual and speaking miracle of ourselves in

great (or at least sufficient) knowledge, mortified and crucified passions, interior life, as the Apostle describes it, courteous manners, charity that bears all and works hard. When the dispositions and the will of a candidate for the seminary are not such as to furnish well-founded hope that he will reach such heights, he should be refused admission, and if the mistake is only discovered after admission, he should be admonished without delay, gently but firmly, to leave.

Why such care in admitting a candidate to the seminary? Is it not enough to find out the want of good dispositions and good will before ordination? No. St. Charles Borromeo gives the reason of it, viz.: he will leave the seminary as he enters it. Strong language indeed, but experience confirms it. There are those among the inexperienced who think that disposition is all, while others think that education is all. Both are necessary, but disposition is the most indispensable. Good dispositions with even a middling education will produce wonderful results; the best of education would be almost useless when it seeks to improve a wicked disposition. Numerous educators of the clergy attest that experience fully shows up the fatal illusion of hoping that one will leave the seminary as a good priest, when he entered it with a wrong disposition.

There are two intrinsic reasons why the mistake we allude to should be absolutely avoided: the first

is that candidates with an evil disposition, if admitted, will most likely succeed in being ordained without a vocation; the second is that they will be very detrimental to their companions. Easy access to an ecclesiastical career was one of the greatest evils which troubled the Church and degraded the clergy as far back as the days of St. John Chrysostom.

The objection, as cunning as it is silly, that after all there is no great need or hurry, since five or six years will elapse before ordination, is answered by a great educator in the following terms: What is the use of investing one with the clerical garb, when it will have to be removed afterwards? Why admit a corruptive element into the seminary? Is it wise for a farmer to sow cockle and to be compelled to uproot it afterwards? With the best care some non-called will squeeze in, but is that a reason to give up watchfulness? Once admitted they will consider it necessary to continue; hypocrisy will come to their help; corruption concentrated in their heart will become an art, a system; eventually they will be ordained and soon after cast off the sheep's clothing and the wolf remains.

If then a scandalous or at least a non-priestly life begins, the ordinary cause is found in a want of vocation, but a further inquiry would lead to the source of the evil — the admission into the seminary without the right dispositions, and without a generous

will to become true and worthy ministers of the Lord. If the moral tone of a seminary is not always what it should be, who are the chief causes if not the scabby sheep?

The seminary is the noviciate of the priesthood. The noviciate in a religious community lasts at least one year. It is to the interest of the congregation as well as of the novice that he be dismissed as soon as a want of religious and moral dispositions is discovered. The religious community relieves itself of a disturbing element and the young man can select a state more in keeping with his character and dispositions. The noviciate in the seminary lasts six years, or, including the Petit Seminaire, twelve years; we treat chiefly of the last six years. The time to prove moral aptitude is spread over a longer period, and is combined with the necessary proofs of intellectual fitness, all of which demands a longer trial and complicates the judgment of the Superiors. In the meantime the young man with the wrong dispositions hurts the seminary and himself, and is a source of annoyance to his Superiors. He himself is the chief sufferer, because the longer he stays the harder it is for him to qualify for another occupation in life; delay is a great disadvantage to him.

It is plain that the prescriptions of the Council of Trent concerning admission to the seminary bind all interested. If one is bound to the end, he is also obliged to use the means, which in our case are: ex-

amination, study, knowledge of the dispositions and the will of the candidate, both things that cannot be seen or touched, because they are interior, and can only be deduced from the exterior signs "introspiciendo" as Pius X enjoined in his Motu Proprio "Sacrorum Antistitum." This is not an easy task, especially as regards the sensual disposition, the most hidden to Superiors and the most infectious to companions.

What is the best method to acquire the knowledge of the disposition and of the will, on which hope of good results can be built, as demanded by the Council of Trent for admission to the seminary? Some authors content themselves with informations only, but recommend that they be obtained from persons who are thoroughly acquainted with the qualities and the behavior of the aspirant, and conscientious enough not to hide nor exaggerate either the good or bad qualities. Experience shows that such informations very rarely suffice; those who decide the admission should add a personal study before passing judgment upon fitness. How, where, and for how long should this study be made? There are various methods. All agree in the necessity of cultivating religion and piety in our boys in general, particularly in those who express a desire for the priesthood, and of preventing their admission to the seminary without the necessary dispositions. The first then to serve the Church are the Confessors or Directors

about this critical time in the life of their penitents or charges. In the secrecy of the confessional and in their public instructions they must make the boys understand that a vocation is a most special grace of God, not extended to clans or families, but to the individual, and that usurpation of the priestly office against the will of God is sacrilegious impudence. These truths should also be impressed upon the minds of fathers and mothers, because they may, through a false sense of piety, or oftener for an earthly motive, betray and crucify their son and the Church.

All do not listen to the voice of truth, and yet in due time a judgment must be passed. The facts on which it will be based are the certificates, and the personal impression the candidate makes. The Pastor, fully aware of the importance of the step to be taken, and of his personal responsibility, should be able to give much useful information. But this is not enough; a further examination by Superiors well versed in clerical pedagogy must bring out the salient traits of his character and dispositions. A few and rare acts that may be the result of hypocrisy are not a sign of vocation, but the habits contain the seeds which will develop into the virtues required for the Catholic apostolate. Only such proofs should carry weight in the preliminary examination as will manifest the inclinations, the character, the whole soul of the young man.

Some authors propose as practical means to attain that purpose:

1. That the young man apply for admission to the seminary a year before he finishes his classical course. The applicant could then be better watched by his professors and directors. It is not easy to play the hypocrite for a whole year. This would give to all concerned the time to investigate the motives which led him to apply.

2. That after admission there should be a sort of noviciate for the new arrival. With the help of the testimonials, public and confidential, and special vigilance for a few weeks, with frequent examinations to ascertain his mental ability, it should not take long for the Superiors to convince themselves of the signs of a true vocation.

3. The supreme reason which should settle the question at that time would be the practical application of the sentence of Wisdom: "I was a witty child, and had received a good soul" (VIII. 19). A sufficiently bright mind and a candid soul are the chief points to pass the test successfully. A brilliant mind, a poetic vein, a great power of imagination are all excellent, but they are of no use in ecclesiastical matters without solid virtue. In a ministry of such humility, abnegation, and charity the candid soul overbalances the rest.

The seminary of its nature and purpose does not correspond with the noviciate of the religious con-

gregations, and therefore there is for the secular clergy no institution for the thorough trial of the moral fitness of the candidates, because the purpose of a seminary is to instruct and educate the young men "who have given unquestionable signs of a vocation to the priesthood." Yet the Council of Trent demands positive proofs before the Superiors can be morally certain of such vocation. Testimonials which merely certify negative goodness, or from parties who do not know the young man sufficiently, cannot be construed into positive proofs of a good disposition and of a right intention; hence serious efforts must be made to secure such proofs. Great writers suggest that the first few months in the seminary should be devoted to that, and that in the meantime the aspirants should not wear the clerical garb, so as to leave them greater liberty in the event that they prove deficient in the requirements demanded. If some must be eliminated, the step will not lead to a shortage of priests; on the contrary the really good ones conscious of their own mission will be the seed of better vocations. Experience shows that when in a seminary studies are on a decline and with them piety and discipline, the number of students also dwindles. The contrary is true when piety, study, and discipline are reinforced, because, after all, it is God who must call His future ministers and does call them.

Chapter Twentieth

ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE SAME SUBJECT

UP to now the Holy See has not given us the directions how to proceed in ascertaining the positive proofs of the good dispositions and the right intention in a beginning seminarian. By command of Pius X the Consistorial Congregation issued a circular letter to the Bishops of Italy on July 16, 1912, in which it recites the true causes of the scarcity in the number of aspirants, and of the great number who fail to persevere in the seminary, and then adds: "Whatever the causes be, the divine promises guarantee that the levitical tribe in Israel will never die out, and that the divine assistance and the vocations to the priestly state will never fail to the end of time, and that there never will be a want of generous souls who respond to the voice, even when it invites them to privations and sacrifice; there is no need to lose courage for the present want in many dioceses. We should rather think of the remedy, and therefore it is necessary that the Ordinaries excite and enlist the zeal of pastors and other zealous priests to find out in their parishes the young boys of good dispositions, of sufficient knowl-

edge with an inclination towards the concerns of the Church. When they have found them they should take special care of them, lead them in piety and in study, with patience, with love, with all diligence, also in a material way, in order that if the Lord calls them, they may be fit and prepared to answer the call and in due time enter the seminary. In this way the Church has gained in many dioceses a band of choice seminarians and priests." The above words were addressed to the Ordinaries in Italy, which perhaps for centuries had too many priests.

When the Church shall give other directions, we shall accept them all with joy, but in the meantime it cannot be denied that the application of the above norms everywhere would guarantee the safe admission of aspirants to the preparatory colleges, or even to the seminary. But what interests the Church more than number is the holy and perfect formation of the future ministers of God; that must be the aim of all. In dioceses that have colleges for the purpose of educating young boys for the seminary and the priesthood, none as a rule are admitted to such colleges, unless they manifest an initial inclination towards the ecclesiastical state.

To meet as far as possible the directions we have from the Holy See, we distinguish three periods in the right formation of a boy who may eventually become a minister of God. The first is a diligent general education for all the young boys of a parish;

the second, a special attention for those who excel in good dispositions, docility, cheerful assistance at the sacred functions, taste for the reading of spiritual books, frequenting the Sacraments, and avoidance of wicked companions; the third is most exquisite care of them in the Petit Seminaire or the college that takes the place of it. With a tactful eye their Directors will find out *in foro externo* the abuse they make of their liberty, and begin the thinning of the ranks at an early stage, to spare Mother Church and the souls the pest of wicked priests.

Those who are to judge the dispositions of the boys must realize that it is a hard task, and know what a good disposition is, the shortest and easiest way to find it out, and the best method to ascertain whether a given disposition is good enough for a sign of a clerical calling with reasonable hope of good results. Disposition or character in a generic sense is that complex of natural qualities which incline an agent to act one way rather than another: in this sense it applies also to irrational beings. Under a moral aspect disposition may be defined a natural inclination to good or evil in general, or in particular to one kind or another of good or bad actions. We call it a natural inclination to distinguish it from an acquired inclination produced by external causes, such as: education, example, reading, etc. This distinction is of great importance, be-

cause the natural inclination is much harder to overcome than the acquired inclination.

How can we discover in practice such an inclination? Many modern writers contend that we cannot know the character or disposition of an individual, because a variety of temperaments produces a variety of dispositions. They claim that we should first learn the teaching of physiologists and pedagogists concerning temperament, the signs which manifest it, and the effects which each one produces on the inclinations of a man; then apply such teaching to each individual, and thus come to the knowledge of the disposition. They further insist that this theoretico-practical knowledge of temperaments is so necessary that without it we cannot educate young men well, nor spiritually direct the faithful well. Others contend that such study is not only useless but injurious.

We are of the opinion that such knowledge cannot be absolutely necessary, and that it may prove useful or injurious according to the prudent or imprudent manner in which it is made use of. We deny the absolute necessity of such knowledge and prove our assertion by the undeniable fact that there have been and are numberless educators and spiritual directors, who have filled these positions in a most satisfactory manner, without going through any course of physiological studies. Moreover, those means cannot be absolutely necessary, because there are

others more easy and safe; in our case the end to be attained is the knowledge of the dispositions. There are two methods to acquire that knowledge, one *a priori,* the knowledge of the cause; the other *a posteriori,* the knowledge of the effects. The first is difficult, wavering, and uncertain, as is clear from all that has been written about temperaments. Descuret says that they should not be called temperaments, because the etymology of the word indicates a certain pose, an equilibrium, whereas they never balance; there is always the preponderance of one organic agent over the others, and therefore they should rather be called physical constitutions.

Many use promiscuously the words — temperament, disposition, and character; others affirm that disposition follows temperament, and that character is formed artfully on the basis of disposition. Kant called temperaments of sentiments those that regard the manner of receiving impressions, and temperaments of activity those that regard the manner of reacting. Then he subdivides both into excitants and depressors of physical energy. All the above correspond to the plethoric, melancholic, bilious, phlegmatic. Rousseau contended that all temperaments are equal from nature, and that the differences are the result of education. Others contend that every one is born with a temperament all his own, the base of which remains unchanged in all the manifestations of life. Some add the nervous

and the erotic temperaments to the four we have given above.

The essence of temperament is also uncertain. The ancients made it correspond with the four elements, which, according to them, constituted the human body: hot, cold, dry, humid. Others place it in the varied conformation of the skull or of the brain, and in various other forms. The most modern ascribe it to the varied working of the nervous system, because all other systems, as they say, depend upon that.

In regard to the origin of the various temperaments some find it in generation; others in climate, food, etc. They see signs of it in the stature, the color of the eyes, in quick or slow movements, etc. When it comes to the effects of the various temperaments, all is equally uncertain. Often temperaments said to belong to one class produce effects diametrically opposed. This is explained away by the assertion that there are very few pure temperaments; most are mixed and some cannot be classified; apparently all temperaments change with age, locality, occupation — a real chaos. How can we draw conclusions from causes so uncertain? How can a physio-psychic study of temperaments be necessary for a good education and spiritual direction?

The most renowned among the authors favoring the necessity of such study candidly confess the uncertainty of results, and warn not to place too much

reliance upon it. One of them, Micheletti, writes: The controversy on temperaments has long divided the physiologists. After repudiating the inadmissible ideas of a certain school, through a long evolution of ideas and systems, they have with the German School headed by Virchow, come to the denial almost of different temperaments in the human organism. Then he explains which of the modern theories seems the most plausible. Timon-David writes: I know what there is obscure and incomplete in this study of temperaments. Philosophers and medical men cannot even determine their number. Therefore let the confessor guard against absolute reliance on that knowledge, however proficient he may be. It may be an indication, more or less probable, always precious, but up to now very uncertain. Yet, though this study is not necessary, it cannot be called either useless or injurious, so long as no imprudent use is made of it to draw practical and safe conclusions. It may be useful when combined with prudence and applied to particular cases. Though it is not necessary to know the various temperaments in so far as they may be the causes of various dispositions, it is necessary for the educator and the spiritual director to know the dispositions of each one entrusted to their care, in order to cure him with the most suitable means, especially to judge afterwards his fitness for the priesthood.

Pedagogists, moralists, and ascetic writers, all

agree that educating and directing all with the same means and in the same manner would be the cause of serious harm. St. Gregory the Great in his Cura Pastoralis enumerates the different conditions, and the different vices and defects of souls, and indicates different ways, sometimes opposed, to cure them. In the beginning the hope of an enjoyment of to-morrow may not suffice to sacrifice that of to-day, but we have all experienced how helpful to the young is a description of the interior consolations, which the good God grants even in this life to those who for Him overcome themselves, as St. Francis de Sales used to do. Besides the two means which the Lord uses to effect the permanent cure of our spiritual infirmities, are prayer, especially mental prayer including pious and slow spiritual reading, and the Sacraments. Hence educators of youth and their directors should insist upon these means prudently and progressively; as good physicians they should cut off the evil at the root.

To know the dispositions of each is difficult and uncertain, if we adopt the method *a priori*, if we seek such knowledge in the physico-psychic causes. The method *a posteriori*, arguing from the knowledge of the effects is easy and sure. The Eternal Wisdom, to enable us to distinguish the false prophets, told us to know them by their fruits: "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit." (Matt. VII. 18.) When we

see that the conduct of one is habitually good and virtuous, we may infer with sufficient certainty that his dispositions are good. When we see a boy habitually vicious, we conclude that his dispositions or character are wicked. We say "habitually" because, as the interpreters of that passage of Holy Scripture remark, a good man may fall also, but then regret follows and he tries to rise without delay, which proves that such failings are due to human frailty rather than to a wicked disposition. The wickedly disposed man may also perform a good action, but there is no sorrow for his evil deeds, and he does not use the means to amend himself. To distinguish surely good from bad dispositions, we should study the complex of actions, the ease or reluctance with which they are performed, the joy or sorrow which follow them, and above all the diligence or the neglect in the use of the curative and preservative means.

It is not enough to have discovered the good dispositions of a boy to found upon them a reasonable hope of future success as a priest; the good dispositions should be pious and generous. We meet people of good dispositions, honest, just, truthful, and forbearing. These qualities are sufficient to make a gentleman, a middling Christian, a good paterfamilias, but they are not sufficient to make a good priest. He must be a man of God by excellence, and the model of the flock, which means that he must

not only be a teacher, but a luminous mirror of every Christian virtue, filled with the spirit of abnegation, meekness, disinterestedness, humility, patience, and above all, of angelic purity, and of burning zeal. How can he be that, if an aspirant's dispositions are not pious and generous?

We should not forget that grace and education build upon the natural foundation of character, and that ordinarily their effects are proportionate to the degree of its goodness. It is true that we cannot claim from a young boy robust piety or generosity tried by great sacrifices, but we can and we must expect a manifestation of the germs; the soul of the young boy does indeed reveal the virtues or the vices to which he is inclined.

How can those who must judge the fitness of a boy for the priesthood recognize that fitness in the germs? It goes without saying that the spiritual advisor himself must have a pious and generous soul, accustomed to judge itself, to make a thorough examination of these qualities in others. Bishop Dupanloup says that one without a true sacerdotal vocation is unable to recognize and develop the signs of it in another. Besides that, he needs a good dose of prudence, clearsightedness, and experience. Presupposing all these good qualities in a spiritual adviser, we may then restrict the practical manner of succeeding in his purpose to this: Train the spirit of the boy in true piety. This training will enable him to

know the degree of goodness and generosity in his character, and therefore his fitness to the priesthood, or the absence of it. If he has a natural inclination to the supernatural he will carry out the suggestions of his spiritual director with delight, ease, and perseverance; from that the able director can conclude the solidity of his piety. The piety demanded is not that which is made to consist of many devout practices, or in a pleasing sentimentalism, but the only real piety consisting in a great love of God and of the neighbor. To actuate the faithful correspondence with grace, generosity is required; the sacrifice of the natural inclination to evil must be made; slothfulness in good works must disappear. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence for all, but this violence must be all the more generous, when the virtue to be attained is higher, and the dangers to be avoided are more serious. It must indeed be very generous in a minister of the sanctuary, whose life is an unbroken chain of sacrifices, and whose virtue is subjected to the most severe trials. The young boy should furnish sufficient indications of this generosity; if he is to be a priest, he is quite able to love God much. He will show his generosity in his efforts to avoid even slight faults, and bad companions; he will not overlook his catechism lesson, nor be absent without a just cause from the sacred functions; he will frequent the Sacraments, and make more of a good book than of the funny papers. He will over-

come in all the foregoing human respect, his own ease, and inclination.

In the same way as the virtue of a good priest must be far superior to that of the good laity, so must the boy, destined by Providence for an ecclesiastical career, manifest virtue and goodness superior to his age. This is owing not only to the good disposition with which the Lord favored him, but also to the special graces which He prepares for him, that he may be fit to be His minister. These are the young men whom the Church desires admitted to the seminary; there is no doubt but that she wants them all admitted. May the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the mediation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, grant that all educators of the clergy be thoroughly convinced of it.

EPILOGUE

THE CHURCH, seeing the endlessly rich harvest and the small number of true laborers, has always desired and procured the increase of the number; she wills that only those who are certainly called, but all of them, shall be admitted. There are two special reasons why the Church in our days desires more fervently than ever that a great number of young men be drawn to the clerical state. The first is a decreasing number of sacred ministers; the second, the ever increasing needs of the faithful, and of souls in general.

The Church in the United States has in the past been largely dependent for its clergy upon the Catholic countries of Europe. Now, with many large flourishing seminaries all over the land, we have occasion to thank God for the success of all the sacrifices made. According to the Summary in the Catholic Directory of 1925, we have 23,697 priests, including secular and regular, with about 800 Catholics on an average for each. When we take into consideration the number of priests who are engaged in educational work, act as chaplains, are incapacitated through sickness or old age, we may conclude that

a thousand souls are entrusted on an average to every priest on the parishes. In a parish there may be only one priest; all must go to confession to him. He must encourage frequent Confession and Communion; most of his congregation belong to the working class; Saturday night and Sunday morning is about the only time that they can go to Confession, and he must hear them individually. On Sunday morning he probably binates; how many can he hear? Suppose even that the Pastor is willing and able to spend the whole of Saturday in the confessional, his penitents could not be expected to linger all day in church. We need not mention the sodalities, clubs, and other organizations in a parish to make it plain that the Pastor unaided can hardly attend to all his duties. Scarcity of priests in the diocese prevents the Bishop from giving him an assistant. The sad outlook in some Catholic countries may be brought home to us more forcibly, if we do not exert ourselves in finding vocations.

Well informed writers tell us that at no time in the history of the Church was this need more felt than at present, when the need of priestly endeavor is greatest. The eternal fight between good and evil was seldom more fierce and obstinate than at present. The world is divided into two great armies; the one, under the banner of the Cross, fights for truth, justice, faith, and God; the other, under the banner of rebellion and sensuality, fights for lies, in-

justice, freedom of thought, and atheism. The first counts in its ranks all the true children of the Church, the kingdom of God upon earth; the other enlists all the enemies of Christ. The one is led by the priesthood of the Church; the other by those who pose as priests of humanity. All can see in this state of affairs the importance and the need of the work of the Catholic clergy; many officers are needed to lead the spiritual forces. The above are the thoughts of Pope Pius IX expressing the wish for a greater number of evangelical workers. Since the great Pope uttered these words, the needs have been on the increase.

Father De Giovanni, S.J., in an excellent article of November, 1915, wrote in the Italian "Apostleship of Prayer": They say, and truly, that the war has caused an awakening of the religious sentiment; it must have been asleep before. But this awakening will be only a strawfire, the vow of the mariner during a storm, without the assiduous and wise action of the clergy. . . . Faith needs defenders more than ever and heralds for poor human society becoming pagan again, after forming a new religion of patriotism without God; virtue is ignored; decency everywhere outraged. We must procure a brighter future for society. The next generation will not improve with the aid of chemical formulas, from which the young men of to-day will learn to make homicidal explosives. We must inject a Christian

lymph in the virgin souls of the young, and teach them the doctrine and the law of Jesus Christ; we must lead the children to the confessional and to the Holy Table. More good priests are then of urgent importance to the universal interests of all the faithful. Who would administer to them the Sacraments, direct their consciences, pray for them, teach them the Gospel, if the priesthood were to fail? They need not be so many, but they must be good, thoroughly imbued with their high mission; selected bodies are never very numerous. Let us not content ourselves with prayer, but with all means at our disposal help the recruiting of the clergy. Any institution that endeavors to instill the spirit of piety in our boys, aims at least indirectly at the same purpose. To help directly a priestly vocation is a work of exquisite Christian charity. We cannot indeed infuse a priestly vocation in one who has not received it from God; vocations are not failing but correspondence, fidelity to the call, fails. To save a young man from the danger of losing his vocation to the priesthood is a most valuable deed in the eyes of God.

The holy Archbishop of Milan, St. Charles Borromeo, notified all the Pastors under his jurisdiction that he would measure the zeal of each by the number of aspirants to the priesthood procured. In the days of St. Alphonsus priests were overnumerous in Italy, yet he said that he saw Bishops weep, because

they could not find pastors for vacant parishes. Benedict XIV, a contemporary of St. Alphonsus, insisted in his first encyclical upon the serious obligation of Bishops to improve the spiritual training of the boys to increase the number of true vocations.

Some lament that the young boys of the present day are so insubordinate, and averse to religious practices, that an attempt to make them pious is time lost. The greater difficulty only proves that we must redouble our zeal in undertaking and supporting that great work; difficulty does not prove the uselessness of our endeavors. The Gospel has conquered paganism, and even to-day it converts and sanctifies the worst savages; how could we imagine that it has not the power to animate the faith of those who already possess it? and above all in those who are well disposed? It is true that the times are sad, that the boys do not receive the right training, that they hear mostly wicked principles, that they have chiefly bad examples before them; no wonder that they are insolent, obstinate, and despise religious practices. Shall we, with folded hands, leave them to themselves? All boys are not of the above description; all homes have not ceased to be Christian. There are thousands of good Christian fathers and mothers who would indeed be happy, if they knew how to help fill the ranks of the clergy, how a good priest's formation begins in the early years of youth.

Let us resolve, dear reader, to cultivate the spirit of piety in our boys to the best of our ability. If we notice some of them endowed with good dispositions, real piety, abhorrence of sinful pleasures, let us surround them with special care and help. When any of them expresses a desire of embracing the ecclesiastical state, let us try to have him admitted to the seminary, and perform thereby a deed conformable to the spirit of the Church, who at all times and now more than ever desires admitted only those, but all those, who with the required dispositions aspire to the priestly state.

100 EUCHARISTIC CRUMBS

OR

ANALOGY BETWEEN THE PRIEST AND THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Short Points of Meditation

1. "I have seen God in man," said a lawyer after a visit to the holy Pastor of Ars. A priest may indeed be called a spiritual Eucharist. In him may be recognized with a certain analogy the new species, which hide the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ and reveal Him in words and deeds.

2. The priest contains, like the Holy Eucharist, the idea of sacrifice; he must be the first victim. On that condition only can his ministry be fruitful.

3. Whoever approaches the priest must carry from his presence the impression of God, and the fruit of eternal life.

4. After sin an epidemic fever of passions has come into the world; a fever that feeds on rights and frauds, on good and evil; a universal fever that urgently demands relief, peace, salvation, in order not to cause eternal death. To bring that relief, that peace, and that salvation, was the undertaking of Jesus Christ, the purpose of His life, of His works,

of His teaching, of His death, and of His institutions. That is the mission of the Church, the purpose and the mission of the priest.

5. A priest must offer, bless, preside, preach, and baptize. (Pont. Rom.) Preside, not to make a show of authority and gather praise and service, but to busy himself entirely in the work of the salvation of souls. Preach but remember and practise the facere and docere of Jesus Christ.

6. Let a priest attend to himself (in meditation) and to doctrine, if he would save himself and his hearers.

7. In regard to all loose matters let him remember: fuge cito, fuge longe, fuge omnia.

8. The priest without piety is a mercenary, a wolf in the Lord's fold; his piety will be in proportion to his meditation.

9. Meditation is the key of wisdom; a thoughtful mind is the principle of all good. (St. Aug.)

It is horrible to pass a day without prayer. (St. Aug.)

10. We are priests in name through ordination, priests in deed through meditation.

11. Either a life of sin or of meditation.

12. As the priest so the people.

13. The priest is ordained for the people, and in the first place for the sinners. " I have not come to call the just but the sinners."

14. Let the priest not have debts with God, with the Church, or with the people.

With God by practising penance.

With the Church by spending for the Church and for souls whatever riches he has acquired in the exercise of his ministry.

With men by paying his debts promptly and scrupulously, and by making his will in careful keeping with equity, justice, and charity.

15. Because he must be always prepared, the priest will keep his book of intentions in order, and marked up to date.

16. A priest will be a priest if he zealously strives to keep his soul pure by mortification even in lawful things.

17. In dealing with women let him be on his guard.

18. The basis of a priest's life is order in his daily life and in his affairs; order is God's line. (St. Aug.) Let all things be done decently and according to order.

19. Do well whatever you do and you will have praised God all day. (St. Aug.)

20. Whatever is not God is nothing. (St. Aug.)

21. The priest who invariably says his office with attention, and celebrates Holy Mass with devotion, and makes his meditation well, will without fail perform the rest of his duties.

22. The two eyes of the priest are piety and knowledge.

23. Piety for the priest takes precedence over study; a pious priest will also study, a studious priest may not be pious.

24. A priest cannot keep aloof from social Catholic activity, but only after having attended to his essential ministry and duties; he will not wait for the people to come to him, he will go to them with the press, with societies and unions which tend to relieve material distress.

25. Nothing offends God more than the non-priestly life of a priest.

26. Do the work of God if you wish to be a man of God.

27. Do not gaze upon what you cannot desire.

28. Ambition and self-interest are the pests of the priestly state.

29. A priest in his behavior must appear as the mirror of God.

30. Let a priest be aware of his dignity, remembering that heaven does not open or close except at his voice.

31. Let the priest remember that wherever he touches the cross it quickens. Suffering, tribulations, and crosses are such a favor that the soul cannot be worthy of them without a great act of mercy

on God's part. For the rest without suffering one does not do any good to himself nor to others. (St. Catherine of Sienna.)

32. The world may be full of priests, and yet the harvest needs laborers.

33. God sent His disciples and the priests, not to acquire earthly wealth, honor or rest, but to wage a fierce battle, to work, and to bear much fruit in patience.

34. A priest begins to go wrong from the day he neglects prayer.

35. Let the priest engrave on his heart these two pronouncements of Jesus Christ to St. Catherine of Sienna: *a.* I am who am, thou art who art not. *b.* Take care of me, I shall never fail to take care of you.

36. In corrections kindness is stronger than authority, entreaties stronger than threats; charity effects more than power.

37. The way of the Saints is to do good and to suffer evil.

38. Very many priests are lost. (Sts. John Chrys., Gregory, and others.)

39. The priest has no more efficacious means to assure his own salvation than that of devoting himself to the confessional.

40. The two lungs of a priestly life are: intense

spirituality in contact with God and an intense service in contact with men.

41. A priest must discharge his duties of confessor properly, but if he does what he can in study, prudence and patience to exercise that ministry rightly (without scruples) he finds in it the most efficacious means for his salvation and self-sanctification.

42. To render himself fit for the right service, a priest should not neglect spiritual reading. (St. Jerome.)

43. A priest must know that the obligation to do all in his power for the salvation of souls does not spring from temporal compensation, nor the serious need of the people, but it is an obligation essentially inherent to his state and inseparable from the sacerdotal character, so much so that no authority can dispense of it.

44. Every one shall give an account of his own sins, but the priest also of the sins of others.

45. Any care, any business, any effort, which is not for God or the salvation of souls, is on the part of the priest idleness and a deviation from his state.

46. We cease to be ministers of God from the moment we cease to work for the salvation of souls, because the priesthood exists only for the needs and the profit of the Church.

47. The means to attain the purposes of the priesthood may be reduced to two: Preach the word of

God and administer the Sacraments, provided these means be accompanied with holiness of life and learning.

48. Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content. (1 Tim. VI. 8.)

49. A continual effort to perfection is considered perfection.

50. Priestly holiness is constituted by true zeal and by safeguarding perfect chastity.

51. This holiness is not of counsel but of strict obligation, as the expressive words used by the Councils, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church clearly indicate: oportet, necesse est, requiritur, opus est.

52. The efficient causes of true zeal and of the guardianship of perfect chastity are meditation and study.

53. If a priest is a man of meditation, he will undoubtedly be a man of study, of piety, of true zeal, and of chastity. If he is not a man of meditation, he will not have the other qualities, or have them only in appearance, in a degree insufficient and even ruinous to his ministry.

54. The spirit of prayer is the germ of vocations.

55. The excessive anxiety of a priest to work may prove ruinous to the priest, who must never depart from the source of meditation and spiritual reading, and give the proper time to them, even if he must

shorten the work of his ministry; he must be convinced that not the duration, but the value of his ministry produces the effect.

56. The just priest lives from faith, on condition, however, that he continually meditate the truths of faith.

57. The will follows the intellect, in other words, the sentiment, the will and the work depend upon meditation.

58. Where there is deep reading or meditation, there is also fervor in speech and in work.

59. Whosoever gives up meditation will soon become a beast or a demon. (St. Theresa.)

60. Where there is meditation there is also the will and the work. (St. Thomas.)

61. Blessed is the man, who shall meditate on the law of God day and night . . . he shall bring forth his fruit in due season. (Ps. I. 2.) In my meditation a fire shall flame out. (Ps. XXXVIII. 4.)

62. We have absolute need of meditation and of prayer, as of two feet to walk (St. Bernard).

63. The beginning of all good is the thoughtful mind; the cause of all evil is not to meditate. (St. Aug.)

64. A priest is wanting in all if he is wanting in prayer (Pius X).

65. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen

you that you may bring forth fruit and that your fruit remain." These words necessarily induce the priest to consider that, as the individual is chosen to the priesthood through a divine call, so also through a divine vocation is a priest called to the fruit of his ministry, and to make the fruit durable.

66. All our admiration, our love, and enlightened union is due to the Pope, because he is the Vicar of God; Jesus Christ is visible in him; he represents the whole Church, the miracle and the mystery of God.

67. If the priests do not obey their Bishops, they are not only infamous but banished from the kingdom of God and from the gathering of the faithful (St. Clement).

Those who do not obey their Bishops are without doubt guilty and reprobate. (St. Clement.)

Let us follow the Bishop as Christ followed the Father. (St. Ignatius.)

Whosoever are of God are with the Bishops. (St. Ignatius.)

Whatever the Bishop approves is pleasing to God. (St. Ignatius.)

The priests should not act without the advice of the Bishop, when it is required. (Conc. Laod.)

Avoid those priests, whatever their dignity, or intellectual attainments, who are not sincerely and openly with their Bishops.

68. Obedience without discussion and without delay is due to the Bishop.

69. The priest holding to the Gospel of God, keeping the commandments of God, and following his Bishop, as Christ the Father, may be killed but cannot be conquered.

70. There is nothing excelling a good priest, but nothing more despicable than a prevaricating priest.

71. A thousand times blessed and worthy of immortal honor are the true priests, who are the gods of the earth.

72. O Ministers of the Lord! Your power illustrates to us the most beautiful attributes of the Godhead.

O touching ministry of the priest! He is appointed judge in the Church of God; he is the reconciliator, the carrier of peace and of eternal salvation to men.

73. If the priest desires that his dignity be recognized, let him show no attachment to the things of earth. As the god of the poor let him open his heart to pity, and provide for the unfortunate, for the needy of any kind.

74. When you say the Divine Office think of nothing else besides it (St. Bonaven.).

75. God sent me. That is the motto of the priest in all the works of his ministry. Nothing can resist, all gives way to these words.

76. Let the priest, as a minister of Christ, seek God and souls, not the world or mammon.

77. The priest who does not practise what he preaches condemns himself.

78. Let the priest examine every evening whether he can say to the divine Judge: I have guarded thy vineyard.

79. If the shepherd must give his life for his sheep, how much more his temporal means.

80. From the priest the little ones expect the milk of piety, the adult solid spiritual food, the just the rule of a perfect life, the penitent and the sinner reconciliation.

81. The priest is between the anvil and hammer. He leads a life either of recollection, of piety and prayer, or of dissipation, turmoil and in the latter case becomes useless and negligent, and is therefore cursed by God. Maledictus homo qui facit opus Dei negligenter.

82. An ox belonging to ourselves or to a friend, when fallen into a ditch, finds some one to help him out. Shall the priest abandon in their sad condition the souls whom God has created and Christ has redeemed, and who are destined to eternal glory?

83. Work ardently for the salvation of souls. A converted sinner is worth more than the whole world. You have saved a soul, you have predestined

your own. The true priests shall shine as stars for all eternity.

84. The means to work out the salvation of souls are: prayer, study, the will and the work.

85. A divine precept commands all, to whom the care of souls has been entrusted, to know their sheep, to offer sacrifice for them, to feed them by the preaching of the divine word and the administration of the Sacraments, and the example of all good works, and to take a fatherly care of the poor and of all kinds of unfortunates. (Council of Trent.)

86. Humility alone is the raising of the priest. Humble yourself in all and you shall find favor with God. He gives His grace to the humble, and lifts up the poor from the dunghill.

87. The most honored should be looked upon as the vilest, unless they excel in knowledge, dignity, or holiness. "The high he knoweth afar off." Fruitless is the ministry of those who exalt themselves.

88. A convinced mind only can convince, only the heart that speaks appeals to the heart. The convinced mind and the heart that speaks can only be found in a man of prayer.

89. The gift of converting souls depends upon fervent and continual prayer. The prayers of St. Stephen obtained the conversion of St. Paul.

90. The priest must move on with these two feet:

meditation and prayer. Meditation shows what is wanting, prayer obtains that it be not wanting.

91. In the exercise of his ministry: Os prudentis quæritur in Ecclesia. Brotherly indulgence with medical firmness. The priest is as the shepherd of the whole world. Therefore he must care for all and provide for all, as God does whose place he takes. (St. John Chrys.)

92. Holy Mass represents a very high honor, a celestial beatitude. Why should it be less to deal with Christ under a veil than with Christ in His glory? No less preparation and thanksgiving are required.

93. Among those ordained there are business men, possible captains of industry, good farmers, clever scientists, but not all priests are men solely devoted to the needs and the profits of souls.

94. A priest must shine in learning as in conduct. Learning without a good life makes him arrogant; a good life without learning makes him useless. (Conc. Aquisg.)

95. There is a way that seemeth just to man, but the ends thereof lead to death. (Prov. XIV. 12.)

96. One to whom the preaching of the divine word has been entrusted perishes with the evil-doers, who are lost through his silence, if he be ashamed of them or fears them.

97. It is the priest's duty to reveal God by words and deeds, and to know the law.

98. A maxim often to meditate on: I should be either nothing or dead. If I am not nothing, I should live for the One who created me. If I am not dead, I must live for the One who died for me — Jesus Christ.

Christ died for all, that they also who live, may not now live for themselves, but unto him who died for them. (2 Cor. V. 15.)

99. Trade till I come, says Our Lord. (Luke XIX. 13.)

100. What you have freely received freely give. (Matt. X. 8.)

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The Priest and His Mission.

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